

OPERATIONIA VOL. X.2

RAIMON PANIKKAR

PHILOSOPHY AND  
THEOLOGY

PART TWO  
Philosophical and  
Theological Thought



# **Opera Omnia**

*Volume X*

## **Philosophy and Theology**

*Part Two*

Philosophical and Theological Thought

# **Opera Omnia**

## **I. Mysticism and Spirituality**

**Part 1: Mysticism, Fullness of Life**

**Part 2: Spirituality, the Way of Life**

## **II. Religion and Religions**

### **III. Christianity**

**Part 1: The Christian Tradition (1961–1967)**

**Part 2: A Christophany**

### **IV. Hinduism**

**Part 1: The Vedic Experience: Mantramanjari**

**Part 2: The Dharma of India**

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## **VI. Cultures and Religions in Dialogue**

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## **VII. Hinduism and Christianity**

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## **IX. Mystery and Hermeneutics**

**Part 1: Myth, Symbol, and Ritual**

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## **X. Philosophy and Theology**

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## **XI. Sacred Secularity**

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## SERIES FOREWORD

All the writings it is my privilege and responsibility to present in this series are not the fruit of mere speculation but, rather, autobiographical—that is, they were first inspired by a life and praxis that have been only subsequently molded into writing.

This *Opera Omnia* ranges over a span of some seventy years, during which I dedicated myself to exploring further the meaning of a more justified and fulfilled human lifetime. I did not live for the sake of writing, but I wrote to live in a more conscious way so as to help my fellows with thoughts not only from my own mind but also springing from a superior Source, which may perhaps be called Spirit—although I do not claim that my writings are in any way inspired. However, I do not believe that we are isolated monads, but that each of us is a microcosm that mirrors and impacts the macrocosm of reality as a whole—as most cultures believed when they spoke of the Body of Śiva, the communion of the saints, the Mystical Body, *karman*, and so forth.

The decision to publish this collection of my writings has been somewhat trying, and more than once I have had to overcome the temptation to abandon the attempt, the reason being that, though I fully subscribe to the Latin saying *scripta manent*, I also firmly believe that what actually matters in the final analysis is to live out Life, as witnessed by the great masters who, as Thomas Aquinas remarks in the *Summa* about Pythagoras and Socrates (but not about Buddha, of whom he could not have known), did not write a single word.

In the twilight of life I found myself in a dark forest, for the straight path had been lost and I had shed all my certainties. It is undoubtedly to the merit of Santo Bagnoli, and of his publishing house Jaca Book, that I owe the initiative of bringing out this *Opera Omnia*, and all my gratitude goes to him. This work includes practically all that has appeared in book form, although some chapters have been inserted into different volumes as befitted their topics. Numerous articles have been added to present a more complete picture of my way of thinking, but occasional pieces and almost all my interviews have been left out.

I would like to make some practical comments which apply to all the volumes:

1. In quoting references, I have preferred to cite my previously published works following the general scheme of my publications.
2. Subject matter rather than chronology has been considered in the selection, and thus the style may sometimes appear uneven.
3. Even if each of these works aspires to be a self-sufficient whole, some ideas recur because they are functional to understanding the text, although the avoidance of unnecessary duplication has led to a number of omissions.
4. The publisher's preference for the *Opera Omnia* to be put into an organic whole by the author while still alive has many obvious positive features. Should the author outlive the printer's run, however, he will be hard put to help himself from introducing alterations, revisions, or merely adding to his original written works.

I thank my various translators, who have rendered the various languages I have happened to write in into the spirit of multiculturalism—which I believe is ever relevant in a world where cultures encounter each other in mutual enrichment, provided they do not mislay their specificity. I am particularly grateful to Milena Carrara Pavan, to whom I have entrusted the publication of all my written works, which she knows deeply, having been at my side in dedication and sensitivity during the last twenty years of my life.

*R.P.*

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*Asterisks indicate the original writings of the author, the source of which is explained in the notes to the individual texts and in the specific index of the author's original texts.*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*Hindū Scriptures*

<i>AV</i>	<i>Atharva-veda</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>Brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>BG</i>	<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>
<i>BGB</i>	<i>Bhagavad-gītā-bhāṣya</i>
<i>BhagP</i>	<i>Bhagavata-purāṇa</i>
<i>BP</i>	<i>Brahma-purāṇa</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Brahma-sūtra</i>
<i>BSB</i>	<i>Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya</i>
<i>BU</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad</i>
<i>BUB</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad-bhāṣya</i>
<i>CU</i>	<i>Chādogyā-upaniṣad</i>
<i>GopB</i>	<i>Gopatha-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>IsU</i>	<i>Īśa-upaniṣad</i>
<i>JabU</i>	<i>Jabala-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KathU</i>	<i>Kaṭha-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KenU</i>	<i>Kena-upaniṣad</i>
<i>KenUB</i>	<i>Kena-upaniṣad-bhāṣya</i>
<i>MaitU</i>	<i>Maitri-upaniṣad</i>
<i>MandU</i>	<i>Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad</i>
<i>MāṇḍKār</i>	<i>Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā</i>
<i>MB</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
<i>MundU</i>	<i>Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad</i>
<i>NarS</i>	<i>Nārada-sūtra</i>
<i>P</i>	<i>Purāṇa</i>
<i>PrasnU</i>	<i>Praśna-upaniṣad</i>
<i>RV</i>	<i>Rg-veda</i>
<i>S</i>	<i>Sūtra</i>
<i>SantPar</i>	<i>Mahābhārata-Śānti-parvan</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>SU</i>	<i>Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>TMB</i>	<i>Tāṇḍya-mahā-brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Taittrīya-saṃhitā</i>
<i>TU</i>	<i>Taittirīya-upaniṣad</i>

<i>U</i>	<i>Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Vakyap</i>	<i>Vākyapadiya (Bhaṭṭabari)</i>
<i>VisnuP</i>	<i>Viṣṇu-purāṇa</i>
<i>YS</i>	<i>Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali</i>

*Christian Scriptures*

<i>1 Cor</i>	<i>1 Corinthians</i>
<i>2 Cor</i>	<i>Second Corinthians</i>
<i>1 Jn</i>	<i>First John</i>
<i>2 Jn</i>	<i>Second John</i>
<i>1 Pet</i>	<i>1 Peter</i>
<i>Acts</i>	<i>Acts of the Apostles</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>Colossians</i>
<i>Dan</i>	<i>Daniel</i>
<i>Eph</i>	<i>Ephesians</i>
<i>Ex</i>	<i>Exodus</i>
<i>Ezek</i>	<i>Ezekiel</i>
<i>Gen</i>	<i>Genesis</i>
<i>Heb</i>	<i>Hebrews</i>
<i>Is</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>
<i>Jn</i>	<i>John</i>
<i>Lk</i>	<i>Luke</i>
<i>Mic</i>	<i>Micah</i>
<i>Mk</i>	<i>Mark</i>
<i>Mt</i>	<i>Matthew</i>
<i>Prov</i>	<i>Proverbs</i>
<i>Ps</i>	<i>Psalms</i>
<i>Rev</i>	<i>Revelation</i>
<i>Rom</i>	<i>Romans</i>
<i>Sir</i>	<i>Sirach</i>
<i>Song</i>	<i>Song of Songs</i>
<i>Tit</i>	<i>Titus</i>
<i>Wis</i>	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>

*Others*

<i>Denzinger</i>	<i>H. J. D. Denzinger, Enchiridion symbolarum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, A. Schönmetzer (ed.), Barcinone: Herder, 1973</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae</i>
<i>SW</i>	<i>Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis Werke</i>

## INTRODUCTION

The following essay, "Philosophy as Lifestyle,"<sup>1</sup> serves as a fitting introduction to this volume, *Philosophy and Theology* (a distinction that has no reason to exist since the two disciplines are mutually implicit), because it underlines the importance that philosophy—understood not only as the *love of wisdom* but also as the *wisdom of love*—has had throughout my life.

"No word without voice and form . . ."

1. Philosophy is just as much the *wisdom of love* as it is the *love of wisdom*. And true love is not only spontaneous but also ecstatic, that is, nonreflective: it does not address itself via critical analysis. It does not have a why. As soon as I can give a reason for my love, it is no longer genuine love. Being a philosopher is like being in love—it just happens. Philosophy is a primary, not a secondary, attitude: "He who is cursed by God to be a philosopher!" as Fichte said. Philosophy cannot be manipulated either by will or by reason. Both will and reason are means and tools, but they are not masters. Philosophy is a particular kind of love. It is wisdom, the wisdom of love, the wisdom contained in love. Philosophy is not simply *erōs* or *agapē* or *bhakti* or *preman*. It is the kind of *sophia* (*jñāna*) of primordial love. It is transparency, splendor (*svayamprakāsha*) of the original and all-conceiving *kāma*, impulse, urge, act, the *karman* of Reality. And wisdom is born when both love of knowledge and knowledge of love spontaneously merge.

Primal philosophy will then crystallize into a way of life—or rather, it becomes the expression of life itself, written or expressed in reality by one's own personal way of life. The kind of philosophy that deals solely with structures, theories, and ideas, and remains distant from life, avoiding practicality and repressing feelings, is not only one-sided, because it does not take account of other aspects of reality, but is also bad philosophy. Reality as such cannot be grasped, comprehended, and realized by a single organ or in only one of its dimensions. Such an approach would not merely turn philosophy into another science, a new form of algebra, but it would destroy philosophy as wisdom and prevent the expression of philosophy in a human lifestyle. For this reason, all traditions require a pure heart, an ascetic mind, and an authentic life as the foundation for genuine philosophical activity.

Philosophical activity needs total involvement. A morally bad person may be a good mathematician, but cannot be a philosopher, at least not in an existential sense. As a Zen master might say, only when you are yourself—your pure self—will you know things as they are. This form of wisdom, together with experience, includes, but also transcends, what the Western tradition since Kant has called the *critical aspect of philosophy*. Every critical analysis has to end at an ultimate experience, and it is here, at the seat of wisdom, that philosophy is born. In the past I have called this *sophodicy*.

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction was inspired by the chapter "Philosophy as Life-Style," which appeared in A. Mercier and M. Svilar, eds., *Philosophers on Their Own Works* (Bern: Lang, 1978).

2. How can I state my philosophy without thereby adulterating it? The moment my lifestyle is no longer spontaneous and free (because it may no longer be pure, or it may be determined by external factors) my philosophy ceases to be authentic. Can I be a true witness to myself? Can I be truly critical of myself? Can the self remain the knower when it is also the known? Would I not block up the source, were I to return to it? "My dear one, how can you know the knower?" one *Upaniṣad* asks (*BU* II.4.14). I could indeed retrace my life's journey, yet I can only see the footsteps when no longer standing in them. Therefore, I doubt that it is possible to make a personal statement about myself. *No word, unless it becomes flesh!*

Perhaps, though, I can do something else: recall the burden carried along during my pilgrimage uphill, and see if I can make it lighter by getting rid of the superfluous.

3. I have always felt a great need to encompass Reality, or better, to become (live) Reality in its fullness. Hence my interest in the ultimate questions—not in a purely theoretical manner but by fully participating in them as a person. After studying the speculations on the Absolute throughout human history, I was so filled with the desire to seek what was real beyond its appearances that I felt tempted to leave reality behind. I was tempted to become either a specialized academic or an a-cosmic monk; I felt the immense attraction and fascination of both paths—pure intellectual abstraction and uncompromising asceticism. If I have now taken the academic as well as the religious path, then, it is only because a professor for me is one who "professes," who expresses a "profession" of faith, a confession of faith, with the whole of his life. And a religious is one who struggles, who strives to reach the harmonious union of the sacred and the secular.

In this regard, I sense my calling to a synthesis, to having an all-embracing, global approach. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body has become a living symbol to me. Nothing of what exists must be lost. The Real cannot be dissociated from the bodily—indeed, it cannot exist without matter, although it does not consist of matter alone.

4. My academic studies began with matter. For seven years, physics and chemistry were my most serious intellectual occupations. On the side, I started studying philosophy, but not because I had become disillusioned with my scientific studies. In fact, there was a continuity of interests: my philosophical *pathos* had been there all along; however, it took patience to enable me to follow these interests in an intense and systematic fashion. All that led to long years of strictly philosophical studies and intellectual activity.

The linear structure of the written word forces me to also write about my theological studies, but again, this interest has been present since my early conscious life. There was no break or sudden turning point. But even the term *theology* soon became too small to describe my interest and involvement, my total absorption in life, in full communion with Reality. To me, this point is the religious urge; I understand religions as different paths that lead to fulfillment, to happiness, or to liberation. Rather than understanding religion as something that ties us (*religat*) to the Ultimate End, I view it as something that unties us from all limitations and thereby offers us freedom and joy.

The truly religious person is not the one who says, "Lord, Lord,"<sup>2</sup> but the one who existentially overcomes the separation between God and World. Only thus can we learn transcendence: "Lord, when did we see you naked, hungry, in prison . . . ?" (Mt 25:37–40). The ineffability of God can only be maintained by not talking about it.

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<sup>2</sup> See Mt 7:21.

The "thought of transcendence" either destroys thought or eliminates transcendence. At this point, it will be evident that I could not have been satisfied with a purely theoretical attitude, but had to live in the wisdom that moves Man, the Gods, and the Universe: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise!"<sup>3</sup>

Now, leaving my *confession* aside for the moment, I want to say something about my *profession*: about what I "profess" as my convictions, that is, what has subdued me and convinced me (*con-victus*) in my struggle with Reality—which, obviously, has not always looked like an angel.<sup>4</sup>

I would like to sum up my philosophical life under two headings: *existential risk* and *intellectual responsibility*.

5. *Existential risk* is the risk of a life rooted in more than one culture and more than one religion, of an existence of orthopraxis as much as of orthodoxy. Personal circumstances (of a biological, historical, and biographical nature) prompted me to accept the risk of a conversion without alienation, of acceptance without repudiation, and of synthesis or symbiosis without syncretism or eclecticism. Here, the Hindū doctrine of personal *karman* (*suddharma*) became to me a new living symbol. It is not that I consider myself at will both Indian and European, Hindū and Christian, or that I artificially declare myself both a religious and a secular person. Rather, it is that by my birth, my education, my initiation, and my practical life I am a person who simultaneously lives the original experiences of the Western (both secular and Christian) tradition, and the Indic (both Hindū and Buddhist) one.

It took me about three-quarters of my life to be able to say this with confidence. I am aware of the risk involved in doing so, but the challenge remains. Mutual understanding and cross-fertilization among different world traditions can only take place by sacrificing one's own life in an attempt to overcome the existing tensions, without becoming schizophrenic, and at the same time to maintain the polarities without falling victim to a personal or cultural paranoia. Only such an attitude of serene acceptance makes it possible to bring about the desired transformation. Intercultural dialogue is not just a political necessity or a purely academic exercise. It is a personal issue, and has to begin with intrareligious experience. If I do not feel and suffer in myself the painful tensions and polarities of reality, if I only see one side from the inside, the other from the outside, I will not be able to "com-prehend," that is, to embrace the two visions of reality and so do justice to them both.

Another way of expressing this experience would be to mention my interest in myth and my trust in the Spirit. This trust brought me to accept (rather than choose) the *dharma* of my concrete existence and to devote myself to work out a personal spirituality. This kind of spirituality attempts a dialogue with the foundation of the Human that is not solely or primarily based on the *logos* but that considers the Spirit equally fundamental. In the Western tradition there is a tendency toward "crypto-subordinationism" that cannot be overcome, even by a great number of new and well-grounded pneumatologies, and even less by phenomenologies. The Spirit cannot be reduced or subordinated to the *Logos*.

A phenomenology of the Spirit, of spiritual reality, is as incomplete as a ballet performance in a silent film. *Mythos* and *logos* belong together. Yet their relationship is neither dialectic nor mythical; it is rather a relationship that constitutes them. If the connection were logical, the Spirit would suffocate in the *logos*; if it were mythical, the *logos* would be reduced to Spirit.

<sup>3</sup> Panikkar here quotes a sentence by Luther. [Ed. note.]

<sup>4</sup> See Gen 32:29.

In other words, there is no *logos* without *mythos* (of which the *logos* is the language), and there is no *mythos* without *logos* (of which *mythos* is the foundation). The “no-man’s-land” of their relationship is completely empty. Neither dominates the other. Here the Buddhist *śūnyatā*, radical emptiness, became a living symbol for me. Only *pratityasamutpāda*, the radical relativity of all that exists, can maintain a harmony without prevarication.

6. *Intellectual responsibility* is not lesser than existential risk. It consists of expressing these basic existential experiences in an intelligible way. Can the multitude of one’s personal experiments and experiences find intelligible expression? This could bring us back to the question whether it is possible to overcome the monism/dualism dilemma in the intellectual as well as in the existential sphere.

This is the exact place for the notion of *advaita*. By that I mean the immediate experience that opens up to us a reality where differences are not absolutized (dualism: God/world; matter/spirit), not ignored (monism: pure materialism, pure spiritualism), not idolized (pantheism: everything is divine and only divine), and not reduced to mere shadows (monotheism: one single principle; one ruler, many subjects). A polarity under tension is characteristic of Reality. Here the symbols are secularity, *advaita*, and Trinity: time and timelessness are co-extensive and correlated; the ultimate intuition is a-dualist; Reality is Trinitarian.

It is impossible to elaborate on this intellectual task in detail here. I limit myself to a few thoughts.

a. The concept of *ontonony* (*nomos tou ontos*), relating to both the internal and the constitutive *nomos* of every being, contributes—I believe—to mutual understanding and enrichment among the various areas of human activity and spheres of Being by allowing (ontonomic) growth without breaking harmony. This concept seems to me crucial in politics, economics, science, metaphysics, religion, and life itself. It does not establish a loose and severed independence of particular spheres (autonomy) or the dominion of the so-called higher spheres over the weaker and smaller ones (heteronomy), but the reciprocal relationship, the radical relativity (*pratityasamutpāda*) that shows us that Ultimate Reality is an a-dualist polarity, and that therefore the good for every particular sphere of being is its harmonious integration in the Whole (ontonomy).

In our ecologically damaged world, we are beginning to accept that it cannot be in any country’s interest to use more energy than others; that it cannot be advantageous to become the strongest military power in the world; that it is not reasonable to practice liberalist laissez-faire or to impose artificial measures; that limiting freedom provokes rebellion; that encouragement of anarchy provokes totalitarianism; and so forth.

Is it possible to develop an ontonomic order? In this respect, the symbol is the *person*, in my opinion. Does not the mystery of the person consist in being neither singular nor plural? A person is the conjugation of all pronouns. If I hurt the “I,” the “you” will suffer. If I honor the son, the mother will rejoice. Developing such an ontonomic status, where the optimum is not necessarily the maximum, is not only a science but an art. Here theory needs *praxis* and also *poiesis*, creativity: not technology but *techno-culture*. The latter should not be confused with technocracy, where it is the power of technology that is expressed, not the art of the *technē*.

b. I would like to introduce here—along with the ultimate and therefore irreducible differences, like those formulated in ontology and theology—the *symbolic difference*. This shows the symbolic structure of all reality and overcomes the dichotomy between subject

and object on the epistemological level as well as the ontological level. A symbol is not another "thing" like a sign (which is noetic by nature). A symbol is simply what appears in the symbol itself. To take the symbol for the thing is as wrong as taking the thing for the symbol—and yet they are not *two*. The symbol is neither on the side of the object nor on the side of the subject, but in the relation between them. Recognizing Being as a symbol opens, in my opinion, a new chapter in the encounter of cultures and worldviews.

c. A third neologism enables me now to outline briefly something of crucial importance for understanding Man and the plurality of cultures and religions. Phenomenology has made it possible for us to understand quite diverse states of consciousness by means of an appropriate *epoché* (the shelving of the question of real factual existence), thereby arriving at the intelligible *noéma* (unit of perceptual meaning). Correspondingly, we need *pisteuma* in order to access the symbols of faith. Two basic assumptions are made here: first, that faith is an essential, fundamental phenomenon of the *humanum*; and second, that human self-understanding is another fundamental element of Man's essence (unlike the essence of an objectifiable "thing"). Therefore, one needs to know first what Man believes himself to be in order to understand what Man is, and therefore, to a certain degree, one must also understand his beliefs. Clearly, we should not underestimate the "methodological" difficulties involved here.

d. Furthermore, my studies on the relationships between cultures have led me to the notion of *diatopic hermeneutics*, which differs from morphological as well as from diachronic hermeneutics. The difference is that diatopic hermeneutics starts out with the awareness that the *topoi* (the *loci* of the various worldviews) cannot be understood using the categories (tools of understanding) of only one tradition or culture. While morphological hermeneutics unfolds the hidden treasures of a certain culture, and while diachronic hermeneutics bridges the temporal gap in the history of human culture, diatopic hermeneutics seeks to effect the convergence of radically different human horizons. The first step here could be *dialogical dialogue*, which penetrates the *logos* all the way to the *mythos*, thereby differing from simple dialectic dialogue. How can we share in the self-understanding of another person? The problem here is vast and complex: again, we need a love union between *mythos* and *logos*, or between *ātmavāda* and *nairitmyavāda*.

e. Another way of expressing the same insight is to speak of the *tempiternal* nature of Reality. Secular culture is correct in saying that Being and Time are "co-extensive," so that there is nothing that remains untouched by time. However, the time aspect of reality is only one aspect of the tempiternal nature of all things. Reality is not exhausted solely by its temporal aspect; reality is not temporal now and eternal "later," but tempiternal, both temporal and eternal at the same time.

f. Finally, I have been wrestling with the formulation of what I have called the *cosmotheandric* or the *theanthropocosmic* intuition. Reality is a-dualist, and every being has three constituting dimensions: the cosmic, the human, and the divine; one could also say the material (space-time), the intellectual (conscious), and Mystery (infinite).

After a period in which a mythical-holistic vision of reality prevailed, over the past three thousand years people have tried to master reality by means of division, abstraction, and specialization. Now the time has come when the fractured pieces of these partial insights can slowly be put together in a new, global vision. There is no matter without spirit and no spirit without matter, no world without Man and no God without the universe, and so forth. God, Man, and World are three forms, artificially given substance, of the three primordial

attributes that describe Reality. The three worlds (*triloka*), found in practically all traditions, should be synthesized into a view that does not overlook the insights of analysis but makes possible the rediscovery of Reality as a dynamic whole. There are not three separate areas or levels; instead, each aspect interpenetrates the other two; each dimension is present even in the smallest piece of Reality.

An example from the field of religion is the view of the various world religions as dimensions of one another. No single religion—not even all traditional religions taken together—has a monopoly on *religion*.

g. What has been said results from a personal experience that is neither individualistic nor sociological, but that occurs in the tiny mirror that reflects, and therefore contains, all Reality—in the intimate microcosm of the person, in the depth of contemplative love to which I referred at the beginning.

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While the first section of Volume X, *Philosophy and Theology*, features the entire book *The Rhythm of Being*, a reworking of my talk at the Gifford Lectures (Edinburgh) in 1989, *Philosophical and Theological Thought* includes a large number of essays, beginning with a short book dating back to 1948, *F. H. Jacobi and the Philosophy of Sentiment*, and spanning a period of over fifty years. As it proved extremely difficult to order the various subjects in logical form, we have chosen to simply arrange them in chronological order.

As an epilogue, two texts have been added: one of the author's "unfinished symphonies," in memory of Martin Heidegger, and a poem sent to the author by Heidegger, entitled *Sprache*, bearing witness to the profound intellectual bond between two thinkers who are both aware that dialogue can only take place if it is deeply rooted in each of the respective traditions and concerned about the degraded language of our time.

## SECTION I

### F. H. JACOBI AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SENTIMENT\*

*Duplex est cognition . . . una quidem speculative . . .  
alia autem affectiva seu experimentalis.*

Thomas Aquinas<sup>1</sup>

*Videte ne quis vos decipiatur per philosophiam.<sup>2</sup>*

Col 2:8

\* \* \*

## INTRODUCTION

Philosophers are, to a great extent, responsible for philosophy's notoriety and the prejudices that currently weigh upon it. This is the reason why it is urgent not only to consolidate—and to a great extent, elaborate—a *philosophia perennis*, but also to succeed in its rehabilitation.

This investigation considers itself to lie within a line of the *justification of philosophy*; it attempts to contribute to a *sophodicy* whose need is intensely felt in our times. We must justify the role of philosophy in life, we must reassess wisdom, rescuing it from the dominion of the particular sciences. The philosopher may not be the *wise man*, but the scientist certainly is not.

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\* Original Spanish text first published in the journal *Sapientia*, La Plata (Buenos Aires), 1948. Translation from Spanish by Carlotta Ros.

<sup>1</sup> "There is a double type of knowledge: speculative, and sentimental or experimental" (*Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.97, a.2, ad 2).

<sup>2</sup> Literally: "Do not let anyone deceive you with philosophy."

At times, philosophy is burdened with the imposition of a mission that does not belong to it, along with an equally inadequate methodology. Hence so many of its failures. And consequently, also, the fact that Jacobi's philosophy becomes exemplary. Perhaps the error lies in the personal situation of the philosophers, who bring their personal preoccupations—existential, or of another nature—into their philosophies. In order to properly mature, fruits require water from the fields but also the sun from the sky. Irrigation from intelligence is not enough; God must provide the sun of faith in order for the fruit to ripen—thus the anxiety of those who only worry about the water that flows through the earth without counting on the sun that comes from above. In the Western (Christian) condition, philosophy is not enough for an authentic and true conception of the world.

We have chosen Jacobi especially because of his *latent* relevance. This vocational philosopher—who was never a professor of philosophy—who criticized Kant before anyone else, and who exercised a profound influence on his own time, was temporarily buried by the nascent Idealism. When Idealism later subsided at the end of the nineteenth century, Jacobi returned and had a powerful influence on the European philosophical mentality. We can affirm that his spirit constitutes one of the main foundations of modern systems of thought, of the philosophy of life and of existentialism. He inspired many thinkers indirectly through Dilthey, though in general Jacobi is not widely mentioned. This is due to the fact that his ideas constitute the framework, the point from which one departs, the natural climate in which problems are proposed, which is practically taken for granted as something obvious and seems almost anonymous, like part of our universal patrimony. By studying Jacobi, many modern philosophical problems appear more clearly. Plato, Augustine, and Duns Scotus are not the only historical antecedents of certain directions of modern philosophical thought. There are more concrete and immediate predecessors, and Jacobi is one of them. We mention some examples throughout this study.

The distinction between inference and assent, for example, which John Henry Newman defends as two natural states of certainty, and which had always been admitted in the theological supernatural plane (Christian faith attributes a superior type of certainty to the same rational evidence), has a distinct Jacobian flavor. In Newman, inference and assent do not take disparate paths, as in Jacobi, but rather these two types of certainty complement each other. For Newman, reason is the support that clarifies what already exists in us potentially by *reasonable* assent. In Jacobi, rational influence will be in outright contradiction with vital assent. Here lies all the tension of his system. Newman's *real assent* would, for Jacobi, be on the side of sentiment and opposite reason.

It is curious to note that French existentialism makes use of the same method of diffusion of its thought as Jacobi: the novel, even in its predominantly autobiographical and epistolary forms.<sup>3</sup>

We do not wish to elaborate a historical study in this work, emphasizing Jacobi's influence in our times,<sup>4</sup> but solely to assist in the birth of an irrationalist philosophy.

This is the reason why this work is also not an account of Jacobi's doctrines—their connections with modern systems of thought would then come to light—as, even if they have been somewhat forgotten, they are not, to say the least, unknown.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf., for example, the recent novels of the main French existential philosophers: *La Nausée*, *Les sandales d'Empédole*, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, *L'Étranger*, *Être et Avoir*, *Les Chemins de la Liberté*, etc.

<sup>4</sup> This influence is sometimes recognized so explicitly that it seems impossible not to place other thinkers next to it. See E. Castelli, "Esistenzialismo cristiano?", in *Archivio di Filosofia* (Roma, 1946), 142, where only Pascal and Jacobi are mentioned as precursors of this movement.

<sup>5</sup> Cf., for example, the histories of philosophy by Willm and Überweg, and the meticulous work of Lévy-Bruhl, *La philosophie de Jacobi* (Paris: Alcan, 1894).

We are also not carrying out a critique of the Jacobian system, according to Thomist, Hegelian, or Diltheyan categories;<sup>6</sup> instead, this work is exclusively about trying to understand Jacobi's fundamental philosophical attitude and, once its sufficiency has been demonstrated, to integrate it into a plenary vision of reality within the realist and theist line of a *perennial philosophy*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For the point of view of the latter, see the work of O. F. Bollnow, *Die Lebens-philosophie F. H. Jacobi* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1893).

<sup>7</sup> References to Jacobi refer to his complete works, *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's Werke*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1812–1825) (hereafter *SW* followed by the number of the volume and the page).

## 1

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF SENTIMENT

*In den moralischen Gefühlen  
ist eine Abnung von Ewigkeit.<sup>1</sup>*

Jacobi, SW VI.108

## Origins

*Nulla est homini causa philosophandi nisi ut beatus sit.<sup>2</sup>*  
*Augustine, De Civitate Dei XIX.1.3*

The human spirit is a trinity composed of knowing, wanting, and feeling; of intelligence, will, and sentiment, in intimate concatenation and unity; even if this may not be a homogeneous division, as sentiment is not on an equal plane as the other two powers.

On the other hand, Man aspires to God with *his entire* nature. In this aspiration lies his desire to reach the Absolute, to penetrate as best he can into the whole of reality.

But in his desire for perfection, Man realizes that he is not able to solve problems by means of pure knowledge, but rather that it is his entire being that tends irresistibly toward God. In the first place, he experiences the mutual influence between intelligence and will, which reveals to him that his reason is not absolutely autonomous. But he also discovers that even with the help of will, intelligence cannot solve all the problems that it encounters.

Man would sometimes like to rely on his reason and yet cannot. Many arguments truly *prove*, yet they do not *convince*. To demonstrate is not to convince. Furthermore, when Man experiences that to be convinced is not also to be *converted*, that faith is not mere conviction, he suspects the existence of another sphere. And leaving personal experiences aside, the history of thought itself clearly shows the existence of some a-logical kernel in the intellectual life of humanity. When observing the movements, the variations, the abrupt changes in human interest—history, as well as biology, presents *mutations*—one feels that this motion, this dispersal, cannot be due to a logical process of thought, to an organic development of truths discovered by the intellect, but rather that some nonrational element has become intertwined in the life of people, and that it has crystallized in history.

What, then, is this force that leads reason from one field to another, and offers it the possibility of conquest? What is the element that is prior to reason and uses it as a common instrument? Isn't feeling, more than reason, what links people to life?

It is obvious that Man's desire is not fulfilled merely with what reason provides. Yet it is

<sup>1</sup> "In moral sentiments there is a hint of eternity."

<sup>2</sup> "There is no other reason for Man to do philosophy but to be happy."

this very reason that discovers the existence of enigmas, even if it cannot penetrate into them. Moreover, when human intelligence faces an enigma it does not know how to decipher, it claims the existence of something suprarational.

There are two types of enigmas, from a natural point of view. Some are raised by reason itself. These are the speculative problems that the human mind cannot solve. The essences of spiritual things, for example, are only known to us imperfectly. But there is a second type of antinomy that life itself poses to reason. Perhaps their existence is a consequence of the first kind of enigmas, but these can appear—and in fact they do appear—without necessarily being explicitly posed by the first kind. We are referring to the vital aporias that trouble Man and demand a pressing decision from him. Furthermore, all of this is inscribed within the superior theological area of the supernatural *mystery* itself. Besides the extrarational, there is the suprarational given by divine revelation.<sup>3</sup>

Man has no choice but to appeal to something superior to reason. Thus, when he does not have a supernatural faith, he tries to capture the Absolute—ultimately, Divinity—and the hidden connections of things, with his sentiment. This becomes the substitute of faith. Either faith is admitted above reason, or a new sense (sentiment) is necessary for apprehending the reality that lies beyond the reach of the mind.

Thus, we understand that irrationalism has emerged from reason's frustrated attempt to tackle the monopoly of knowledge. For rationalism, there can be nothing unintelligible; therefore, the philosophy of sentiment emerges quite powerfully once we have lost the margin of trust—also irrational—placed in reason by the culture of the past centuries, which believed that, in time, reason would be able to decipher the mystery of the world.

We can thus understand why sentimental systems are always born when there is no living faith. Philosophy must then be a substitute for religion. And in fact, isn't the belief that philosophy must govern human actions toward the achievement of their end and solve fundamental questions by, in one word, instilling meaning to life, at the heart of any philosophy of sentiment?<sup>4</sup> And, as it does not find an immediate and indisputable rational solution to these problems, it turns to something that does not require either faith (which it does not have) or humanity's progress toward reaching a place where these problems are solved; it turns to something that is *given* immediately to all mortals: feeling/sentiment. A religious preoccupation for existence without religion leads to irrationalism. There is an appeal to sentiment with the hope of sanctioning Man's situation: one deprived of faith and unable to decipher the mystery that surrounds him by solely relying on his intelligence.

If Jacobi still believes in a personal God, it is because that is how he solves the internal problems of his spirit. He searches for God within himself, but without previously—or subsequently—having found Him outside himself: "Man finds God because he cannot find himself unless it is, precisely, with God."<sup>5</sup> The modernity of this posture is extraordinary!<sup>6</sup>

In this position, essentially swelled with pride, Man finds it quite difficult to come to recognize two great limitations of the human mind, and he attempts to overcome them by appealing to sentiment each time.

<sup>3</sup> *Mystery* is here opposed to *enigma*, and the former is reserved for that which is strictly supernatural.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, what Karl Jaspers says about philosophy in his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin, 1925), 2. Even the language is reminiscent of Jacobi.

<sup>5</sup> *SIV* III, 48.

<sup>6</sup> *Modernism* returns once again in our times because it was not enough to defeat it by an official condemnation; rather, it is necessary to address from an orthodox position the real concern that heresy attempts to appease.

Reason cannot adequately know spiritual natures; this is why it does not fully know its own human spirit.<sup>7</sup> Sentiment, instead, would give us direct, clear, and precise self-knowledge. This is why we cannot express spiritual essences with adequate words, and we must turn to negative sources by de-materializing language. On the other hand, the perfect expression of spiritual reality is proper to sentiment. Art is not a chimera. To awaken one's own sentiment in another is not a possibility for everybody, but the artist claims to achieve this.

And, in the second place, the human spirit may err—and in fact, it errs much too frequently: this is the great scandal of "Pharisaic" philosophers. It is not that reason qua reason is fallible, but that Man errs in managing his reason. On the other hand, sentiment declares itself to be infallible as it is immediate. Perceiving sentiments would then be truth itself.

*Irreligiosity, pride, and experience of the mind's impotence* are, thus, three factors that influence the origin of the philosophy of sentiment. Once faith has been discarded because Man does not suffer the weakness of his reason, it seems justified to turn to feelings and sentiment.

### Historical Precedents

*Ich bedürfte einer Wahrheit, die nicht mein Geschöpf,  
sondern deren Geschöpf ich wäre.<sup>8</sup>*

*SW IV.1.xiii*

The philosophy of sentiment is a product of *modern* philosophy, understanding by such not strictly contemporary philosophy, but rather all post-Cartesian thought. It could be defined as the philosophy that claims reason's complete independence.

All medieval philosophy depends, one way or another, on revealed fact. The relationship between reason and faith constitutes the axis of philosophy. Sometimes, when the balance cannot be maintained, complete separation emerges and the existence of two independent realms of truth is proclaimed, in such a way that what is true in one does not have to be so in the other. This is the theory of the two truths held by St. Peter Damian and others. Other times, a more perfect harmonic synthesis is attempted, as in the work of St. Thomas. But medieval philosophy always keeps both forms of knowledge in mind and gives priority to faith. Reason is never fully autonomous.

The philosophical work of Descartes, on the other hand, attempts to radically separate theological from philosophical knowledge. At first glance, it seems to be a new theory of the two truths in a nominalist key, but little room is left for theological truth. Descartes wants to found everything on reason and with full independence of faith. Reason aspires to be self-sufficient and the only criteria for truth. This is the *separatism of reason*.

By completely doing away with faith as a superior form of knowledge, reason is left as the ultimate judge, and so a vital problem emerges, one that comes before we comprehend the nature of what we know: the philosophical concern for the value of our faculty of knowledge itself, the critical problem. Strictly speaking, it is not that this critical problem was entirely unfamiliar in the Middle Ages, but it was posed in different terms, on another prior base. In the Middle Ages, the problem was about reason and its relationship to faith; ultimately this is purely a methodological problem. Can reason attain the truth that, alternatively, faith is

<sup>7</sup> There is an intellectual intuition of the soul, but it is in its actions and through the *species* (in its Scholastic sense) that the intellect acts. See Thomas, *De Veritate*, q.8, a.6, c. And nevertheless, it is true intuition. See below.

<sup>8</sup> "I would need truth not as a creation of mine, but a truth of which I may be a creation."

able to give us? Reason has to justify itself; it has to explain *how* it attains truth—a truth that is undeniably there.

When Descartes eliminates theology—and with it, faith—for "not having dared to submit revealed truths to the weaknesses of my reasoning,"<sup>9</sup> the critical problem becomes absolute and truly critical, as it is formulated directly in the face of truth. It is no longer about *how* I can arrive at the truth, but rather about whether or not I can really reach it. Because there is nothing superior to reason, and reason can only be founded on itself, the problem becomes an anxiety-ridden, vital *preoccupation*,<sup>10</sup> since the collapsing of philosophy and, along with this, Man's *salvation* depends on it. Hence the Cartesian *method of surety*.<sup>11</sup>

This is how the conviction that our knowledge is relative was born. For Descartes, what is not sure stops being true, and what is sure is that which has proved to be successful (mathematical thought). Surety is a relative value. It is limited to knowledge, and this is where the Kantian critique comes in. However, the relative presumes something absolute. Therefore, there must be absolute knowledge above the knowledge of the human mind. Only this second knowledge, which Man may not possess, will be able to apprehend what things *are*. So there is a domain of the relative, of the phenomenal, where the human mind is inscribed, and a domain of the absolute, of the noumenal, which is transcendent with regard to the human mind. This is Kant's critical oeuvre: the analysis of the impotence of our reason and the daring consequence that there is a reality that is unknowable and inaccessible to the human mind, and whose existence must be postulated. But what is most crucial is that this thing, which *in itself* is unknowable, is true reality. This is the basis on which the entire philosophy of feeling will lie.

In fact, Kantian agnosticism is somewhat unstable. The *metaphysical instinct* must be satisfied, one way or another. History proves this sufficiently, and nobody, not even Kant himself, remains in agnosticism. His entire philosophy is an attempt to overcome agnosticism. It is the need of a *counterweight*, which appears as soon as we come to believe in the relativity of our knowledge. Because of this *instinct of compensation* we try to apprehend what theoretical reason is impotent to achieve through another medium.<sup>12</sup> Reality is apprehended by an irrational faculty. This is the assumption of all philosophies of sentiment. For Kant himself, knowledge has a relative value; only will, a good will, possesses absolute value. That is to say, *action dominates knowledge*.

The religious-historical factor of the Reformation also had a powerful influence on the rise of sentimentalist philosophy. People searched for more intimacy with God, but for Luther, reason was impotent, and authority even more so. The only thing left was the sentimental subjective method. Kantian agnosticism will later justify this Protestant posture.

### Formulation

*Das reale Sein gibt sich im Gefüle allein zu erkennen.*<sup>13</sup>

*SW II.105*

<sup>9</sup> Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode* (Paris: Flammarion, 1935), 7.

<sup>10</sup> "Preoccupation," rather than "care" or other words, is I believe a more correct translation of the German concept of *Sorge*.

<sup>11</sup> See my "La ciencia biomatemática. Un ejemplo de síntesis científica," *Arbor* 3 (1944).

<sup>12</sup> Lévy-Bruhl speaks of doctrines of compensation. See *La philosophie de Jacobi* (Paris: Alcan, 1894), xv.

<sup>13</sup> "The real Being can only be known through sentiment."

Feelings cannot be imprisoned in the cold molds of language, which is why they find their most adequate expression in art. But the artistic sign is not univocal; in fact, it basically represents the expression of an individual experience. This is why subjectivity, *interiority*, is the common characteristic of the different sentimentalist philosophies. The more objective reason is, the clearer, more distinct, and more universal it is. With feelings, it is the exact opposite: the more subjective they are, the purer and less universal—less communicable—in a certain sense. They are characterized by their individuality, their uniqueness. A feeling that is repeated, if it is something more than an intellectual or an imaginary memory of the original feeling, will be different from the one that precedes it. A second feeling that is the *subsequent* repetition of a first one is not identified with the latter, whereas with reason there would be this identity. There is a rational logic that operates with objectified reasons, but a sentimental logic that does the same thing with feelings is not possible without the destruction of its defining characteristics.

It is one of Man's invariant characteristics that, when recognizing his own limitations and feeling the anxiety of the infinite and of self-improvement, he will plaintively lament his own finiteness. And because he does not know that which bothers him through his reason, it turns out that all those affirmations stemming from his profoundest depths are perfect for formulating a philosophy of sentiment—without this having to imply that the authors of such are sentimentalists. It is one thing to recognize enigmas in human life, and another to want to elucidate them by means of sentiment.

There are two entirely separate moments in the formulation of a philosophy of sentiment, although they are not always distinguished in the different sentimental systems. One initial moment entails recognizing the impotence and finiteness of reason. Not necessarily its absolute finiteness, but rather the finiteness that is relative to our own anxiety of knowing. This primary study is where all descriptions of the imbalance and tension of our being, submitted to desires and ambitions that it is not able to satisfy, fit. The fact of the limitation of our reason is obvious: not a negative limitation (contradiction), but rather a positive one. There is an affirmation by Pascal that expresses this initial moment: "Tout ce qui est incompréhensible ne laisse pas d'être."<sup>14</sup> Up to this point there is no sentimentalism whatsoever, but rather the recognition of a profound philosophical problem.

The philosophy of sentiment is conditioned by a secondary moment that consists of a peculiar reply to the aforementioned problem. Instead of ascending to a suprarationalism in order to overcome the limitation of reason, it descends to an irrationalism. Instead of recognizing that our reason occupies a lowly position in the scale of intellectual natures—a healthy intellectualism is the surpassing of rationalism—it affirms that reality is irrational, and therefore understandable by some special irrational sense. Pascal, who, precisely along with Fénelon, had such a strong influence on the formation of Jacobi's spirit, also has a characteristic formula for this: *Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point*.<sup>15</sup>

We said that these two moments are undifferentiated in sentimentalism, as it does not admit that there is any other resource to overcome the limitations of the mind than a sentimental system, which is nominally called suprarational even if all its features are infrarational. Jacobi himself is a typical example of this when he calls sentiment "reason."

The Pascalian formula is susceptible to a twofold interpretation.<sup>16</sup> The first is that the

<sup>14</sup> "What is incomprehensible keeps on existing nonetheless" (Pascal, *Pensées* 47 [ed. L. Brunschwig], n. 430).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 277. "Heart has its reasons which Reason cannot know."

<sup>16</sup> See M. Scheler, "Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik" (Halle: Niemeyer, 1916).

heart also has its reasons; that is to say, there are reasons—intellectual reasons, after all—that reason does not know, in the sense that we would never be able to reach it if we left the heart out of consideration. There is an *ordre du cœur* that the human intellect must respect, but which, in short, is also composed of a set of reasons that we must integrate into a global vision of reality. In this sense, Pascal formulates a truth that fits perfectly within a genuine Scholastic tradition.

It is instructive to observe that along this same line we find a man like Cardinal Newman, who we can hardly say has been suspected of rationalism. Newman defined philosophizing as the "power of referring every thing to its true place in the universal system, of understanding the various aspects of each of its parts, of comprehending the exact value of each, of tracing each backwards to its beginning and forward to its end."<sup>17</sup>

But the second (and opposite) interpretation, entirely sentimental, is also possible, that is: "There are certain types of experiences whose objects remain fully closed off to reason; for which the latter is as blind as hearing is to colors; instead, these experiences guide us to certain authentic objects and objectives and to an eternal order among these."<sup>18</sup> We are not interested in discussing whether Scheler's interpretation is genuinely Pascalian; suffice it to say that it constitutes a formulation of sentimentalism.

Nevertheless—and this is a thorn embedded within sentimentalism itself—among the reasons of the heart, however they are interpreted, and those of intelligence, there must be a mutual relationship, not only of influence, but also of primary and superior unification, in order to be able to preserve human unity. It is not possible that the domain of values (to put it in Scheler's terms) be given to us in a sentimental intuition and that the dominion of being in a speculative vision without there being a connection between both dominions and a mutual order that guarantees Man's unity and saves us from metaphysical chaos.

This irrational, sentimental position must not be confused with the suprarationalist, Christian mystical point of view. When St. Augustine, for example, appears to declare that the approval of truth is something more than pure logical evidence, as Man's heart must also approve,<sup>19</sup> he is not referring to any natural feelings, but rather to a quasi-experimental mystical faith,<sup>20</sup> though confused and obscure, as Man realizes that he is incomprehensible to himself.<sup>21</sup> Newman shares this line of thought.

<sup>17</sup> J. H. Newman, *Oxford University Sermons* (1909), 291.

<sup>18</sup> M. Scheler, op. cit., 120.

<sup>19</sup> "Cum ea didici, non credidi *alieno cordi*, sed in *meo* recognovi, et vera esse approbavi" [When I learned these things, I did not believe with another's heart, but I recognized them in my own heart, and I accepted them as true] (Augustine, *Confessions*, X.10.2).

<sup>20</sup> "Tu enim Domine diudicas me: quia etsi nemo scit hominum, quae sunt hominis nisi spiritus hominis qui in ipso est [1 Co 2:11]; tamen est aliquid hominis, quod nec ipse scit spiritus hominis, qui in ipso est. Tu autem scis eius omnia, qui fecisti eum" [Be you my judge, O Lord. In fact, even though no-one knows Man and Man's things except his spirit within him, there is however something unknown by Man's very spirit within himself. But you—as his Creator—do know everything of him] (Augustine, *Confessions*, X.5.1). The human spirit does not know it, though it feels it; it is somehow aware of it, since it says it. Even though Augustine here refers to the level of infused wisdom—a gift of the Holy Spirit—the only thing we wish to point out here is the insufficiency of the rational intellect, which explains the need to turn to a new medium for comprehending the Real.

<sup>21</sup> "Nec ego ipse capio totum quod sum. Ergo animus ad habendum seipsum angustus est" [Nor can I comprehend/brace my whole being. So, Man's mind (*animus*) is too small to be able to possess himself] (Augustine, *Confessions*, X.8.5).

## 2

# JACOBI AGAINST PHILOSOPHY

*La vraie philosophie se moque de la philosophie.<sup>1</sup>*

Pascal, *Pensées* 79

Jacobi repeatedly calls his system a "non-philosophy"<sup>2</sup> and he violently attacks those who wish to apprehend reality philosophically. He aspires to overcome the rationalist stance with his famous "somersault," described below. He criticizes philosophy in the name of life and of reality itself. We have to briefly describe his main notions first in order to better understand him.

### The Principles

*My philosophy derives from sentiment and intuition.*

*SW IV.xvi*

Jacobi's oeuvre does not constitute a philosophy because it does not aspire to be a system, or even an objective universal construction. It is an eminently personal creation, relief for his own heart. This is the reason why Schelling, Fichte, and Hegel, who value Jacobi's person so highly, reject his doctrine. Nevertheless, the man from Pempelfort does not desire to be a lone star, which is why he so heartily pounces on all philosophical systems.

Jacobi refers to himself as a mystic.<sup>3</sup> God reveals Himself to the soul in an unmistakable and irrefutable intuition. Jacobi is not here to defend *science*, but rather faith in God,<sup>4</sup> faith in freedom,<sup>5</sup> in virtue, Man's most precious possession, and he is aware that this is his mission on this earth.

This determination is clear and transparent in his goals, his method, and his results. To strengthen his spiritualist convictions, to justify his *presentiment of the truth* as something prior to any rational investigation: that is his goal. To subordinate reason to the heart, mind to feeling: that is the method. To establish a trusting and living faith in a personal and fair

<sup>1</sup> "True philosophy mocks 'philosophy.'"

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *SW III.9*.

<sup>3</sup> *SW III.437*.

<sup>4</sup> See *SW III.7*.

<sup>5</sup> "Alle meine Überzeugungen ruhen auf der einen von der Freiheit des Menschen" [All my convictions stem from that of Man's freedom] (*SW VI.231*). The text continues stating that this point of departure is one of its peculiarities and that it distinguishes it from other philosophical systems. See also *SW II.46* and *IV.xliv*.

God, in the freedom of the human soul, in the immediacy of feeling and in morality: these are his results. Results which, for Jacobi, will be like a precious possession that must be defended and to which everything must be subordinated.

In the Introduction to Allwill's epistolary, Jacobi says,

The editor of Allwill's epistolary is a man who has never been able to tolerate the thought that his soul lies in his blood, that he is mere breath, and this aversion within him does not originate in a vulgar instinct of conservation. If he desires to live, it is because of another love without which living, even for a single day, would seem unbearable. All of his convictions rest on immediate intuition.<sup>6</sup>

This immediacy is one of the main points of his philosophy. The immediate is the irreducible; therefore, it can be used as a foundation, since the basic *lies within it*. Woldemar, the hero from one of his works, explains himself in a conversation:

There are propositions which do not need to be proven, and any proof of these would do nothing but belittle their immediate conviction. Such is the following: *I am*. This conviction constitutes immediate knowledge and it is used as a measure (pattern) for all further knowledge. Another example is the proposition that what is just (the equitable) must be preferred to what is pleasurable, virtue to well-being. There is no common ground on which these can be compared. Thus consciousness must decide immediately between them. In our own will, we find that we prefer the equitable to the pleasurable, that such is the nature, and consequently, the law of our own being.

Jacobi expresses himself even more clearly, if that is possible, in another place:

After Aristotle, philosophers have not ceased to want to subordinate immediate knowledge to indirect knowledge, the primitive faculty of perception which is the foundation of all knowledge to the faculty of reflection, the original to the copy, the essence to the word, reason to intellect. They would only admit as truth what could be proven or demonstrated twice, once in intuition and another time in its notion; in the thing and in its image, the word.<sup>7</sup>

This is the fundamental principle of his thought, which can once again be expressed in Jacobi's own words:

Just as there is no need to prove sensible reality since it guarantees itself, so the reality that reveals itself to reason<sup>8</sup> justifies itself. Man refers naturally to his senses; and he necessarily has faith in his reason; there is no certainty stronger than this faith. For wanting to prove the reality of our ideas about the material world we have ended up in idealism, and for wanting to prove the truth of our ideas about the intelligible world, the substantiality of the soul, a God who is creator, we have fallen into nihilism. *The only way to know reality is through sentiment.*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See his definition of intuition as *anschauende Erkenntnis* [obvious perception] in *SIV VI.248*.

<sup>7</sup> *SW II.11.*

<sup>8</sup> Jacobi calls sentiment *reason*, as we see later.

<sup>9</sup> *SW II.107.*

Consequently, morality will have no other rule than the "sentiment of the good man." If everybody does not agree on the principles of morality, it is because of artificial reasoning, which, instead of accepting natural beliefs, claims to rise over them and aspires to be a "chimerical" science.

The point of departure of philosophizing is found, for Jacobi, in "certain kernels of truth" that lie in the heart. The role of philosophy consists in clarifying the mystery of our own nature "as far as our spirit is able." Accordingly, the intellect does not put us in contact with Being. Unfolding Being's true revealing organ will thus be the mission of philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

These immediate certainties, these primary sentiments,<sup>11</sup> are anchored in faith; they are faith itself, the faith on which our entire intellectual nature is founded:

We have been born into faith and it is necessary to remain within it. How can we aspire to certainty if we are not given certainty beforehand? And how can it be given to us if not by something which we already know with certainty? This leads to the idea of an *immediate certainty* which excludes all proof and all reasoning, and which is nothing more than representation in conformity to its object. A discursive conviction, as it is not immediate, is never perfect.<sup>12</sup>

Faith is the beginning of all knowledge and all action. At the start of his dialogue, *Idealism and Realism*, Jacobi forces his interlocutor, David Hume, the great skeptic, to perform an act of primary faith. "Do you *think* I am speaking to you?" he asks Hume, and he forces him to confess that, if he does not *think* so, it is because he *knows* it, and he knows it because he feels it, and he feels it because he is the external cause of his own sensation, and he knows he is the cause; that is, he feels the cause as cause by sensible proof, by proof of fact, like that of his own existence; but this existence is precisely the problem.<sup>13</sup> "Your immediate conviction of this reality," Jacobi tells him "*is blind certainty*. Now then, that is what I call *faith*. What is admitted like this, without proof, is that which is believed."<sup>14</sup> The source of all knowledge is either sensible intuition, sensation,<sup>15</sup> or the feeling of the spirit.<sup>16</sup> "What we know through the latter medium we say that we *believe*."<sup>17</sup> Because of this faith, "we know that we have a body and that there are other bodies outside of ourselves and other thinking beings; a true and marvelous revelation that forces us to believe in eternal truths."<sup>18</sup>

Through faith, the doors of the transcendent are opened to Jacobi, although he is not allowed to enter. The Absolute is possessed through direct intuition, but this intuition is blind. Man knows nothing, for example, about freedom, but only that he is really free. Jacobi hurls himself with extraordinary audacity into the territory of true mysticism, into an authentic,

<sup>10</sup> See SW I.363.

<sup>11</sup> *Wesenheitsgefühl* [feeling of being] and *Geistesgefühl* [feeling of the spirit].

<sup>12</sup> SW IV.210.

<sup>13</sup> Jacobi places faith as a premise for doubt itself. P. Wust literally says, "Indem ich zweifle, staune ich zugleich auch über mich selbst" [Insofar as I doubt, I am amazed by myself] (*Die Dialektik des Geistes* [Augsburg, 1928], 214). It is a well-known fact that, according to Wust, amazement is Man's fundamental feeling. See below.

<sup>14</sup> See SW II.141–44.

<sup>15</sup> *Sinnesempfindung*.

<sup>16</sup> *Geistesgefühl*.

<sup>17</sup> SW II.58.

<sup>18</sup> SW IV.210.

experimental knowledge of God. This is his famous "somersault,"<sup>19</sup> which is yet another effort to extricate himself from the prison in which the intellect has incarcerated Man; but after the leap, he remains stationary, and it seems as though he is frightened of being left on his own in this new territory; it seems as if the only thing he was interested in doing was establishing unity, facilitating harmony without culminating it, without fulfilling it. This is the reason why, when he has to act, he will prefer the sphere of nature, of reason, even if it is only to fight against those who run along this field.

If one takes mysticism to mean the attitude that admits the mystery of the universe, then Jacobi is a mystic. "I go in search of the mystery in the same way that others go in search of the conquest of science, the destroyer of mystery. He who hunts down mystery is not my friend."<sup>20</sup> But if mysticism is something more than philosophy, if it leaves the sphere of the rational alone in order to soar toward what transcends all discursive science, then Jacobi is not a mystic, but simply a philosopher of sentiment.

Jacobi calls himself a true rationalist, distinguishing between intellect and reason. Intellect, he will say along with Kant, cannot escape the series of the conditioned, of the relative;<sup>21</sup> whereas he has complete confidence in reason as an exponent of Man's (rational) nature, of a fertile consciousness developed by observation and thought. In any case, we are well aware that reason must be something very special for Jacobi. His reason, in fact—like the external senses, incidentally—neither judges nor forms notions: it is a *revealing organ*. Just as there is a sensitive intuition, there is also a sentimental intuition. These are two irreducible sources of knowledge. The source of immediate truths is "something secret" where the heart, feelings and senses come together. Jacobi calls *reason* this secret faculty, which "presupposes the true in the same way that the external sense presupposes space and the internal sense presupposes time." Goodness, truth, and beauty are revealed directly to reason without the intervention of any reasoning.

### His Attitude

*We must have faith in the sentiments of reason.*

*SW II.72*

Jacobi is fully aware of his sentimental position, and he strives to remain consistent. In fact, despite the internal contradiction of his system, there are very few philosophies as congruent as his, and this congruency spans his life, his work, his personality, and his actions. It has been said that his life is one of the few that do honor to philosophy.

Jacobi does not form a school, nor does he hold a professorship, nor does he attempt to demonstrate the validity of his position: he limits himself to showing the truth he believes to hold to whoever wishes to listen to him. And nevertheless, his influence is widespread. After Weimar, Pempelfort is the place of greatest spiritual concentration in the Germany of his time. Even those who attack his philosophy respect the man. He exchanges letters with all the illustrious people of his time.

<sup>19</sup> *SW IV.59.*

<sup>20</sup> *SW VI.209.*

<sup>21</sup> Since "nur das einsicht, was sie selbst von ihrem Entwürfe hervorbringt" [it only examines what it brings out of its own patterns], *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Introduction. Cf. the same idea in *SW III.20* (quoted below).

He never abandons his point of view; this puts him in an unfavorable position in philosophical controversies, in which he always intervenes wholeheartedly. He cannot beat his adversaries on their own terms: he always has to attack them from outside and as a whole; and his victory consists in reducing them to the absurd—not a logical absurd from which nobody could escape once they had been forced to go there, but rather to a vital absurd that admits many ways out, in addition to the one of not properly constituting an absurd.

Jacobi confronts the entire Enlightenment; he vehemently attacks the moral systems that exist in his time, but he does not refute them. He knows he cannot do that. Like a sovereign judge, he sets them up against moral feelings by means of descriptions and vivid examples. Thus a mother's love for her children is described with intense realism as an argument that dissolves utilitarian doctrines. This is why so many of his works are in the form of novels. To turn morality into a science of reasoning would mean to de-naturalize it.

The form that Jacobi gives his philosophy is one of the most precise and perfect among all the sentimentalist systems. He strives to find an internal coherence for his doctrine, and tries to make reason confess its own impotence in order to justify turning to the heart as a resource.

Furthermore—and in this he paid tribute to his century—Jacobi even feels the need to adopt a rationalist form. In this guise he can also battle contemporary systems from a position of equality, at least apparently. Thus he has no qualms in calling feelings *reason*; and with this *reason* (defined by him as such) he is going to become the first rationalist.

His intellect closely recalls Spinoza's. The more he is forced to apply his intellect coherently in order to accept a system that is repellent to his heart, the stronger his conviction will be that the latter is the original source of truth.

His relation to Spinozism constitutes a fundamental point of his thought. Jacobi admires and at the same time condemns Spinoza's system. From the point of view of the intellect, Spinoza's doctrine is the perfect one, and in addition, it is absolutely logical as soon as the possibility of making the real intelligible is admitted. Spinoza's philosophy, which begins its ascent in the philosophical world precisely with Jacobi, is irrefutable, but it cannot be accepted. If you want to make Being intelligible, you must be a Spinozist and inevitably end up in fatalism. In order to escape this—and, in any case, it is necessary to escape this, as consciousness vigorously testifies to our freedom—we need an act of faith, the personal courage of a somersault. Thus Jacobi must accurately show that any other solution is impossible, and that is what he uses Spinozism for. His attitude could be described in the following propositions:

1. Any coherent system of rational philosophy necessarily leads to Spinozism.
2. Spinozism is unacceptable, as it represents the denial of freedom and of God.
3. Therefore, we must overcome philosophy by virtue of sentiment and place ourselves, boldly and courageously, in its arms.

This overcoming is achieved through the somersault, the special characteristic of Jacobi's philosophy and prime example of its flexibility and dynamism. This leap is not a peaceful harmonization, as "my entire philosophy rests on the dualism and antagonism of blind necessity and intelligent freedom, whose problem constitutes the essence of Man."<sup>22</sup> Rather, it is the only way of going forward, of leaping from the sphere of experience of the sensible world to the sphere of the suprasensitive, of true realities, where we are sure of the existence of God and of freedom.

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<sup>22</sup> F. H. Jacobi, *Briefwechsel*, Roth (ed.), 354.

The Kantian attitude of Kant's first critic is clear. Between these two worlds there is an abyss, a "precipice" of "darkness and emptiness"<sup>23</sup> where those who have trusted the power of their understanding go astray because they do not comprehend that, even if it is possible to descend to the valley of negation, it is not necessarily possible to climb the other summit which is inaccessible to the intellect. A leap of faith is necessary. This no-man's-land is where distress, incongruence, the denial of God, death, mechanism, fatalism, and so on take place.

Were we to perform a transversal cut in the history of philosophy, Jacobi would represent not so much a point of inflection, a maximum or minimum, but something more like a new meeting point, a solid knot, which is, in turn, a point of departure. This is not the place to document the influence of the eloquent and vigorous protest of his moral and religious consciousness against the pretensions and sensibilities of the speculative spirit. Jacobi philosophized more due to a feeling of indignation and a desire to fight for truth than because of mere curiosity or the appeal of science.

Jacobi, in fact, stands alone between two worlds, and his attitude is precisely that of the leap between those two worlds, and not just any leap, but a somersault—in the sense this word is given in sports, that is, meaning an inversion from the ordinary posture. Deists do not like him, as they believe his faith to be much too puerile and foolish, still trusting in a positive religion. The "philosophers" dismiss him as "papist," "fanatic," "mystic." On the other hand, the "mystics" consider that the philosophy of sentiment is superfluous, that sentiment itself is enough, without the philosophy; that it makes too many concessions to reason, even if these are merely formal. Hamann considers as a waste of time the time Jacobi devotes to Spinoza and his complicated and useless methodology. For Herder, Goethe, and others, on the other hand, he is much too mystical. And yet, nevertheless, they all receive his influence.

Jacobi clashes against everyone, and precisely because of this, his influence has reached all subsequent systems. He lies between two historical worlds, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and he is the forerunner of the meaning of nineteenth-century philosophy. Much to his dismay, the eighteenth century also exercises a strong influence on him. Jacobi starts out as a philosopher of the *Sturm und Drang*, and he could be considered its only philosopher if he had not taken its own formulas to revert them against this movement.

In this way, Jacobi has been simultaneously branded as adversary of the Encyclopaedists and as incorrigible liberal, as sincere pietist and as follower of natural religion, as exalted mystic and as rationalist philosopher. He truly lies halfway between Lessing and F. Schlegel, as well as between Voltaire and Schleiermacher.

Schopenhauer, Herder, and all the disciples of Idealism owe essential parts of their systems to him. After Kant, the philosopher who most influenced Hegel was Jacobi.<sup>24</sup> It has been said that many of the implicit premises of modern philosophical systems derive from Jacobi. Heidegger, for example, strongly evokes Jacobi, and the contrast between speculation and life that originates in Jacobi and occupies so much of Fichte's mind comes to fruition again in Karl Jaspers's *Existenzherellung*,<sup>25</sup> on the one hand, and Bergson's *élan vital*, on the other. There is a clear line that initiates in Jacobi and crosses through many representatives of Romanticism until the last idealists, and ends in modern existential *ethos* and in *Lebensphilosophie*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> SWV.119.

<sup>24</sup> See A. F. Bollnow, *Die Lebensphilosophie F. H. Jacobis* (Stuttgart, 1933), 6.

<sup>25</sup> "Enlightenment of Existence."

<sup>26</sup> See below for Jacobi's influence on Wust.

As an example of Jacobi's relevance we could mention his attempt to go beyond idealism and realism (even if he remains within a new realism),<sup>27</sup> which is reminiscent of contemporary approaches to the problem:

There are two propositions that possess the same certainty: *I am* and *there are things outside of me*. They had to find the way to subordinate one of these propositions to the other, of deriving the former from the latter, or the latter from the former—in a complete manner—in order for there to be only one essence and one truth. This way the two main paths, materialism and idealism, have the same goal; their contrary directions are in no way divergent, but rather gradually approach each other until they finally come in contact and mutual understanding.<sup>28</sup>

Ortega y Gasset and García Morente are not very far from this attempt to overcome idealism.<sup>29</sup>

The following passage by Unamuno, for example, possesses a resonant Jacobian flavor: "Maintaining the struggle between heart and head, between feeling and intelligence, the former saying *yes!* while the latter says *no!*: this is what a fruitful and redeeming faith consists in, not in forcing them into agreement." This is just one passage among many.<sup>30</sup>

Bergson exhibits an analogous influence from Jacobi in a letter dated June 11, 1908: "The existence of God is given in intuition. Intelligence strictly speaking, pure intelligence, would end up in atheism: such is the philosophy of Le Roy, if I understood him properly. It is also mine."<sup>31</sup>

The contraposition, so common nowadays, between Man, God, and Nature is also found fully developed in Jacobi. Man is not one more thing in Nature, rather, he is opposed to it. While Nature, with its unalterable mechanical laws, conceals God, Man reveals Him as soon as he stands with his spirit above Nature as an independent power which opposes it, struggles against it, and dominates it.<sup>32</sup>

Another aspect that has proven to be enormously fruitful is Jacobi's doctrine on freedom, that mysterious and therefore undefinable<sup>33</sup> faculty, that "continued miracle" that constitutes one of the central points of his system,<sup>34</sup> and is found "beyond nature."<sup>35</sup> A morality of freedom is that which is currently supported by Sartre, for example, with certain approaches that prove to have an undeniable Jacobian influence, although it is most likely indirect.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>27</sup> "I am realistic in a way nobody before me has been." Jacobi affirms in his posthumous papers. R. Zoepritz, *Aus Jacobis Nachlass* (Leipzig, 1869).

<sup>28</sup> SW III.10–11. See also II.245; III.235.254 ff., 292; IV.211, etc.

<sup>29</sup> Only an irrationalist philosophy can go beyond idealism. There is a prephilosophical, prarational problem, and this problem can only be solved by an act that is prior to that of reason. Yet we do not know of any act that is prior to reason if not an *act of faith*. Philosophy, from Thales to today, is sustained in an *act of faith in reason*. This is what Morente said in his seminar in the University of Madrid on March 20, 1941.

<sup>30</sup> *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1937).

<sup>31</sup> In D. Martins, *La filosofía de Bergson* (Madrid, 1943), 9.

<sup>32</sup> See SW III.425. See also, even more clearly, if possible, SW II.320; III.317; IV.59–60.

<sup>33</sup> See SW III.20.

<sup>34</sup> See SW II.316ff.; III.324ff.

<sup>35</sup> See SW I.240.

<sup>36</sup> See, as an example, Simone de Beauvoir, "Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté," *Le temps modernes* 11 (1946): 193ff.

### Jacobi's Antinomy

*Mich rettete mein eigenes Herz.*<sup>37</sup>

*SWI.189*

Like every philosopher of sentiment, Jacobi prefers to deal with the problems of ethics, as in the vital sphere of moral action the problems of sentimentalism are most urgently presented, and the insufficiency of reason becomes most flagrantly obvious.

Faith, sentiment, and life are the main categories that interest Jacobi. His "philosophy asks *who* God is, not *what* He is." He wants to "design a philosophy of life."<sup>38</sup> Ethical problems are the motor that impels him to take an anti-intellectualist stance and drives him to produce his entire philosophical oeuvre; he will only extend himself to the rest of the fields of philosophical thought as an extension of the moral problem. Any problem that has not been touched by the waters of morality has no place in Jacobi's system; he is not interested in it.<sup>39</sup> However, the most decisive aspect of his philosophy lies precisely in where morality must be grounded: metaphysics. Furthermore, one of Jacobi's most fortunate contributions—even though, by so doing, he simply goes back to the most genuine Scholastic tradition—consists in basing his ethics directly on *anthropology*, which, in turn, is a product of metaphysics. For our purposes now, it is not important that this is a *sentimental metaphysics*.

What in Pascal or in Newman is an apologetic interest of driving Man in his entirety toward goodness and truth has exactly the same ethical tint in Jacobi, though with a certain very human and very comprehensible dismay in an author who finds himself completely alone in the midst of the enemy's arena. Jacobi's novels are voices that cry out in the desert.

But where does Jacobi set off from to found his morality? In ancient and medieval systems, morality is founded on metaphysics; it does not have to found itself; and all ethical discussions consist in illuminating how morality is derived from admitted metaphysical principles, or how it is basically about these same principles that aim at more or less immediate moral consequences. According to Jacobi, Kant emits the mortal blow to all "dogmatic" metaphysics. Morality becomes autonomous, which means that duty is *immediately manifested* to the human soul; and it shows us that we belong to a suprasensible world. This duty is a mystery, according to Kant himself, but we must obey it (which makes Schopenhauer speak of the "old remains of the Decalogue"). In truth, Kant endeavors to prove the categorical imperative's dimension of rationality despite everything; yet there is—according to him—an intuition in the end, a reverence, a moral law, which makes us feel that characteristic enthusiasm of Kantianism. "Kant's method is that of analysis, but the principle is sentiment."<sup>40</sup>

"This world" does not believe in a morality founded on revelation. Kant convinces them that they cannot believe in a dogmatic metaphysics, and that experience cannot be the ground of morality because experience can only testify to that which *is* and not to what *must* be. What is left, then, if morality must be more than mere formalism, but to admit sentiment as its source and ground?

Kantian morality is what opens the door to the morality of sentiment. In fact, once the split of sentiment from pure reason is verified, what other faculty is there that is more apt

<sup>37</sup> "My heart did save me."

<sup>38</sup> *SWI.120*.

<sup>39</sup> The primacy of ethics will later be one of Kierkegaard's bones of contention.

<sup>40</sup> See Lévy-Bruhl, *La philosophie de Jacobi* (Paris, 1894), xxiv.

than sentiment to elucidate these issues? For example, if we affirm that freedom is unknowable and real, does it not mean to say, with other words, that we are sure of its existence as guaranteed by something that is not exactly our faculty of knowledge? This is the first breach through which all of modern anti-intellectualism will infiltrate.

"Jacobi's merit lies precisely in having always opposed the voice of consciousness to the aberrations of contemporary philosophy."<sup>41</sup> And his last bastion is the immediacy of sentiment.

But precisely here is Jacobi faced with the antinomy in its full acuteness. His entire life is, ultimately, a tragic battle between heart and mind. "Christian at heart and pagan in understanding."<sup>42</sup> Jacobi finds that with his intellect he reaches conclusions that contradict his most intimate convictions and deeply rooted beliefs. But this dualism must somehow be overcome: the world cannot be a place of such complete chaos.<sup>43</sup> Yet there is no possibility for the mind to renounce to the validity of the principle of noncontradiction, and even less for sentiment to admit that what it truly feels is false, inauthentic.

His attempt to overcome this with a somersault—which, though irrational, is comprehensible—is well documented. Duality still stands, but it has been overcome in the order of life. Audacity and courage are needed for this.<sup>44</sup> All the better for he who has so severely fought against the cowardly and miserable morality of the calculating and selfish Man who is not even brave enough to do evil.<sup>45</sup> "Does it mean that only reason has been baptised, and the passions are still pagan?"<sup>46</sup>

"There is a light in my heart," writes Jacobi to Hamann in 1783,

but when I want to move it to the region of intellect, it is extinguished. Which of these two clarities is the true one, that of the intellect, which makes us see determined forms up close, but behind them an abyss, or that of the heart, which illuminates us, full of promise in our ascent, but which refuses us determined knowledge? Can the *human spirit* apprehend truth if both clarities are not unified in one light?<sup>47</sup>

This tension conditions—and defines—the sphere of Jacobi's philosophical thought, as does the absolute necessity of solving it since it has immediate contact with our unavoidable actions.

Jacobi, then, criticizes all philosophical systems because he believes that philosophy will ruin Man—and above all else, he wishes to save Man. The same simplistic situation always lies in the background: if we do not possess a supernatural saving force, and philosophy hurls Man into an abyss of chaos and death, we must attack philosophy, because it was the only human hope—and it turns out to have failed.

<sup>41</sup> J. Willm, *Histoire de la philosophie allemande* (Paris, 1947).

<sup>42</sup> F. H. Jacobi, *Auserlesener Briefwechsel* (Leipzig, 1825–1827), 2:378.

<sup>43</sup> SWI.367.

<sup>44</sup> This is precisely Kierkegaard's position. Existing, concrete, personal truths are the only ones that are of interest. Adhering to these can only be done through an *act of faith*, as the intellect does not go beyond the order of the abstract, but faith is audacious, and it is important to dare.

<sup>45</sup> See SWI.186.193; IV.14, etc.

<sup>46</sup> SWV.114.

<sup>47</sup> SWI.367.

## 3

## PHILOSOPHY AGAINST JACOBI

*Philosophica scientia via est ad alias scientias; sed qui ibi vult stare cadit in tenebras.<sup>1</sup>*

Bonaventure, *In Hexaëmeron VII.12*

## Instability

*Wie könnten wir nach Gewissheit streben, wenn uns Gewissheit nicht zum voraus schon bekannt ist?<sup>2</sup>*

*SW IV.1.210*

Jacobi does not, and cannot, deny validity and the *vis polemica* to reason, within certain limits; but he denies its primacy over Man, and subordinates it to the merely dialectic and abstract, as a synonym of the unreal. But sentiment, which Jacobi places at the high point of his system, cannot remain there for very long.

The first incongruence that Jacobi himself suffers is the impossibility of communicating his system to others, as well as that of opposing doctrines contrary to his.

His position is risky, as whoever does not admit sentiment, whoever does not possess this sentimental primary intuition—which the controversy against Jacobi proves is not universal patrimony—whoever does not *believe*, in one word, will have to be forcibly fatalistic, as Jacobi only recognizes this choice. This disturbing alternative, all or nothing, constitutes the tragic tension that at once sustains and confers greatness to his system. Jacobi holds firmly onto the first part of the dilemma—he believes with all his soul in the profound roots of a “presentiment of truth” that will save us from catastrophe, from atheism—but in order to guarantee this he cannot appeal to evidence, not even to history, so that, if somebody affirms that they do not possess this “irresistible *I don't know what*,” Jacobi cannot then argue against them and, nevertheless—and here lies the incongruence—he aspires to the universal validity of his doctrine.

But even admitting the invariability and the universality of sentiment, he must still demonstrate that it corresponds to an objective reality. This step cannot be in any way taken by sentiment but, instead, it can be taken by reason, even in Jacobi.

<sup>1</sup> “Philosophical science is the path to the other sciences, but he who wants to stop there falls into darkness.”

<sup>2</sup> “How could we look for certainty if certainty were not already known to us?”

It is true that there are few things as universal as the desire for happiness innate in every Man. Sentiment—the “heart of a good Man,” as Jacobi would say—feels freedom, to put it a certain way; it feels a Creating Power, and it can even come to feel, or have a presentiment of, this power’s infinity and its own finiteness. Now then, in order to affirm that this God and this freedom exist and that they indeed correspond to something more than a mere subjective feeling of mine, it is not enough that they be catalogued by a phenomenological analysis as transcendent sentiments, since they would thus continue to be sentiments of the subject, but rather it is necessary that they prevail as objective. So that reason has already infiltrated these initial beginnings, as only reason can verify this objectivation. And the latter is not eliminated by recurring to the *immediacy* of the data that sentiment provides; since, without going into discussions on this supposed *immediacy* which is not fully comprehended unless it is considered an intellectual immediacy, if we admit to it, it is no longer possible to avoid a *sentimental immanentism*.

If I justify the existence of God because I feel his presence as immediate, I will be able to say that He is within me, but who will guarantee that He is also out there? The establishment of a mystical-ideal identity between the essence of Divinity and the essence of Man is, in fact, a defining characteristic of Idealism. Jacobi, who is not an idealist, defends himself against such an affirmation, but his doctrine leads to it.

There is no possible communication with a person who does not possess this primary sentiment of mine; I cannot make him feel what I feel. I will only be able to strive to make him *understand* that my sentiment is the right one and that in his, if it is opposed to mine, there is *error*; that is, I will appeal to reason, unless he admits that *his* sentiment is *his* truth—and with that, there is a renunciation to all truth and to the very manifestation of such a thought.

Nevertheless, nobody better than the philosophers of sentiment can enumerate the perpetual problems of life and of philosophy itself in all their complexity; nobody better than them can make our true ignorance of the essence of things obvious; nobody can better carry out a merciless but useful critique of philosophy.

Generally, the unilateral author, precisely because he is such, will discover—in his exaggeration—new aspects and hitherto unheard-of moments that can be of great importance, and need to be incorporated into the full, true system (*philosophia perennis*). This is one of the meanings of heresy and of error.

### Jacobi's Lesson

*Qui crescit in scientia et non crescit in bona vita, elongatur a Deo.*

*Al-Ghazali*<sup>3</sup>

Jacobi constitutes a noteworthy example of philosophical sincerity when confronting a problem that many other thinkers do not even consider because they are not “of sterling character”; they do not live in the truth. On the one hand, this is about the *position of someone who is convinced* and, on the other, about the *conviction of a position*. The former constitutes Jacobi’s greatness and the latter, his weakness. The attempt to inquire briefly into the *implicit suppositions* of the example that Jacobi’s philosophy offers is the problem at hand.

<sup>3</sup> “Who grows in science and not in the goodness of life, departs from God,” cited and approved of by Bonaventure, *Solilog. II.5*.

There exists—and this is a fact—a full conviction of truth, as well as of goodness. The moment that a man begins to philosophize, he carries a certain spiritual baggage with him that can be more or less heavy; but may, nevertheless, in some circumstances, help him achieve the *position of someone who is convinced*. This is not about the problem of *experience*, which is the point of departure of philosophizing, nor of the *situation* of philosophy, though it may have many points in common with this problem; it is the problem of conviction—psychological, if you will—in its blossoming, although, of course, deeply anchored in anthropology and, because of this, also in metaphysics. It is highly significant that Jacobi himself repeatedly speaks of *conviction* where other philosophers refer to *evidence* or some other concept.<sup>4</sup> Complete conviction is immediate certainty while “conviction through demonstration is second-hand certainty.”<sup>5</sup>

What must be the philosophical position of someone who believes himself to be in possession of the truth? It seems as if approaching the investigation of truth with preconceived notions denotes, at the very least, a lack of sincerity. Although we must still find out if the phrase “philosophical investigation of the truth,” so pleasing to our man, has any kind of objective meaning. Is philosophy really the *investigation of Truth*? Or is it rather the *a posteriori* (partial) establishment, (truncated) comprehension, (unfinished) demonstration of Truth? Isn’t Truth God (Christ)?<sup>6</sup> And isn’t religion (Christianity) what gives us the Truth? But setting aside these considerations, which, if followed, would lead us too far away from the main issue, we must ask if it possible to maintain a position of absolute impartiality, of *disinterestedness* in the search for truth. It is often repeated that disinterest is an essential and prior condition to the search for truth. This affirmation has a *moral* meaning that is rigorously exact: in order for truth to shine in our intelligence, we must purify our hearts. But even setting aside passionate interest, *is an absolutely disinterested position possible?* In the first place, it is impossible not to have an interest of some kind in finding truth. But if we are of the opinion that reason does not give us truth, this very interest in truth and disinterest in reason will make us turn to sentiment as the organ of truth. This is, in sum, Jacobi’s position. The problem obviously lies in the prior possession of a criterion for truth.

In the second place, if we are looking for the truth of a matter about which we have no prior convictions, of a matter which is not vital to us, at least not directly (since we are not given the preceding ability to see the entire concatenation of problems among themselves), then we can, in a certain way, affirm that we are proceeding impartially, without prejudice, without preconceived ideas, without an *interest* in favor of one determined solution. But there are some cases where we possess a previously formed conviction. If this conviction comes from the same reason that is going to tackle the problem, it is enough to revise and collate reasons. In this case, there is room for a methodological doubt, but we must be aware that it implicitly assumes a recalcitrant rationalism. But if we possess a conviction that has not emerged *more geometrico*, that is, from reason, we will approach the quest for truth *confidently*; and this quest will be confirmation, proof, and not naked investigation of the truth.<sup>7</sup> Such is the case when one is *sincerely interested* in avoiding contradiction. If there is true conviction, there can be no disinterest.

<sup>4</sup> See *SW* V.122; VI.231, etc.

<sup>5</sup> *SW* IV.211.

<sup>6</sup> See Jn 14:6.

<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, investigation itself is not a blind search among all theoretical possibilities; rather it contains within itself a *being directed*, an intrinsic direction that already supposes an interest and a confidence. See my “Investigación,” in *Revista de filosofía* 2/3 (1942): 389ff.

The πρώτον ψευδός<sup>8</sup> of post-Cartesian philosophical direction, says Peter Wust—strongly recalling Jacobi—is to begin philosophy with a doubt, in such a way that the “true beginning of philosophy must be looked for in the primary emotion (*Unaffekt*) of wonder.”<sup>9</sup>

A provisional doubt is obviously possible, although, strictly speaking, it cannot be absolute since it must forcibly maintain confidence—this is what makes it provisional—in some instrument able to reconstruct that which it feels is true. Now, the methodological doubt is not sincere; it is methodological. The human spirit, which has trusted in the instrument that will shed light on the situation, is waiting to see what will happen. If the reconstruction is carried out in agreement with the fundamental certainties of faith or of sentiment, or common sense, or reason, or whatever, there is no problem. The aporia emerges when disparity appears. The fact of relying completely on only one instrument already allows us to say that, once this position is accepted, the aporia is resolved by bestowing full confidence in this instrument and denying the validity of the voices that rise against the system thus reconstructed. This is Descartes’s position when he uses reason as an instrument.

But this is an earlier problem, and it consists in putting our trust precisely on reason when we can foresee that there will be a clash between its conclusions and what the other forms of knowledge affirm.

We must then establish a hierarchy of orders and subordinate the inferior to the superior; ultimately, this is the most important task in the edification of life, both individual as well as collective, both of a people as well as of humanity: the classification of ends. Now then, as we have stated, we need a criteria for classification or, better yet, a criteria of ordering. Ultimately the *postulate of order* as such, which could be called the *cosmological axiom* (Behn), is what places confidence in the instrument that will be able to maintain the cosmic order.

Jacobi faces this aporia, which he does not know how to solve because he believes it to be possible. We are referring to the reason-sentiment antinomy. Reason *says* that something is true (the truth) and sentiment *feels* it as false, rejects it, and vice versa. The problem goes from being acute to becoming tragic when it is applied to morality, as then it requires a concrete solution. And this is not only about reason defending that it must do something that contradicts feelings, as then the balance would lean toward one or the other side, according to the ethical system that was professed; but rather that it is the very feeling of fundamental morality that is disgusted by rational construction.

The skeptical way out is unsustainable (and the history of philosophy is sufficient proof of this) as Man, the *metaphysicum animal*, cannot stop himself from solving these problems, even if for himself alone, once they have been formulated—since, in addition, they involve the norm of action that he is forced to follow: *omne agens agit propter finem*.<sup>10</sup> Man can stop thinking—at least thinking consequently—and defending skepticism to a certain point before reaching aversion, but he cannot stop acting, he cannot stop having a morality; even a-morality and immorality are moral phenomena. And in this unity, reason and feeling/sentiment clash violently, and it is impossible to adopt the solution of saying that each one is right in its own sphere, as we are in the same sphere: that of moral value. Nor is it viable to accept a conciliatory solution that distinguishes different points of view, since there is only one point of view that my action refers to as a unity. Must I do something that my sentiment

<sup>8</sup> “Original sin.”

<sup>9</sup> P. Wust, *Die Dialektik des Geistes* (Augsburg, 1928), 212. The ill-fated Wust is another case of someone who received a strong influence from Jacobi, either directly or indirectly.

<sup>10</sup> “Every acting subject acts for a purpose.”

tells me is not only disagreeable but immoral, and yet the logic of my reason makes me see as moral, or must I not?

According to Jacobi, Man is subject to this severe dualism. This is precisely the fundamental thesis of his philosophy: to bring to light the contradiction between sentiment—"reason," in the second period of his terminology—and intellect. Analogously to Pascal in the apologetic field, he makes us see dualism, contradiction, and paradox in the most vivid colors, in the most alarming manner, so that the greater the contrast, the greater the chaos, the more vigorous our confidence in sentiment (in grace, Pascal would say), which pulls us out of the abyss and rids us of contradiction.

Hence, if we follow the intellect infallibly—says Jacobi—without any other possible escape, we end up in Spinozism, which means pantheism, fatalism, or even atheism. Atheism is the truth of intellect: "The path of every demonstration ends in fatalism."<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, sentiment induces us, impels us, pressures us into believing with an irresistible force in a personal God who is just and good, in the freedom of Man, in the individual soul, in its immortality, and so on. This is the panorama with which he is faced.

It is necessary, thus, to solve the dilemma, to rule in favor of one of the parts. Either we concede priority to sentiment, and reason is subordinated to it as a pure mechanism that is not able to communicate the reality of things to us, or reason itself is the director and sentiment is not a criterion for truth. In the terms in which Jacobi poses the dilemma, it is obvious that he cannot choose the second solution, as it would save him from mortal dualism but lead him to fatalism. This is why he withdraws "from a philosophy which makes perfect scepticism necessary."<sup>12</sup> We must then search for reasons to fight against reason. This is the problem seen from the inside.

In fact, the problem is posed the other way around. It is not that Jacobi poses the problem this way, although he does reach the unequivocal exposition of the dilemma, but rather that he faces it already stemming from the priority and excellency of sentiment—in the same way that Descartes stems from a purely rationalist position. Jacobi is especially interested in saving his beliefs, he wants to justify himself. He experiences like nobody else the contradictions that exist within Man; he feels the ontic tearing apart of the creature (its fall) and considers his solution to be the only way to ensure the so-called *cosmological axiom* that lies at the heart of all philosophy. In Jacobi, this axiom not only plays the role of passive foundation but also that of active factor in favor of his system; as, indeed, the ultimate reason that makes Jacobi lean toward sentiment is that he cannot, in any way, accept that the world be a disorganized reality, a *chaos* instead of a *cosmos*. And, according to him, this is what would occur if the intellect were able to reach the truth of things, if it were what shows the reality of things. There is an *order* in the world that is irreducible to reason, and even if reason must humiliate itself before sentiment, whatever it may cost, fatalism cannot be true. In short, Jacobi's main experience is this: so much aberration cannot be right! Therefore, let us turn to sentiment, to faith. And he appeals to this implicit rational argument: in the eyes of intellect, the world is chaos. But the world cannot be chaos. Therefore the intellect does not give us a real vision of the world. But why can't the world be complete chaos? Because sentiment gives us an organized world; this is how order comes to be above disorder; therefore the world offered to us by sentiment is the real one. Here lies the cosmological axiom, the postulate of order as ultimate foundation.

<sup>11</sup> SW IV.223.

<sup>12</sup> SW IV.70.

In remarking on the words of the psalm, "Dixit insipiens in corde suo: Non est Deus," Jacobi could have added: "et sapiens in corde suo dixit: Deus est,"<sup>13</sup> and precisely *in his heart*. This is where *salvation* lies. This is the defining characteristic of his entire philosophy. "I accept the accusation of not worshiping science above everything else, of not worshiping knowledge except by reason of its content," wrote F. Köppen in 1803. So does Jacobi: his speculation already knows where it is going, his philosophy wants to save, and everything else matters very little. "I have not searched for truth for itself."<sup>14</sup> "I have not searched for truth for the vain pleasure of possessing it as a discovery of my own; I needed a truth that was not my creature, but whose creature was, precisely, myself, in order to shed some light onto the night I found myself submerged in. It is not for me to boast about this indifference for the results of my investigations."<sup>15</sup>

The fundamental principle of this philosophy, which stems from the analysis and critique of consciousness, is the preestablished harmony between internal nature and external nature, between the subject and the object, the consonance of legitimate reason and objective existence.<sup>16</sup>

Ultimately, this appeal to the order of the universe, to the cosmological axiom, is the only way of concealing an internal chaos that does not cease to appear whenever it can. Jacobi's error consists in the very standpoint that makes him admit the above-mentioned moral antinomy as possible and real. Shouldn't we first search for an internal solution that would dissolve the antinomy? There is, then, an implicit assumption in Jacobi's thought that has made him take seriously the possibility *de jure* of such a contradiction. We have seen that he uses the cosmological axiom to *solve* the aporia, but not to *dissolve* it; the reason is that Jacobi implicitly believes in a subjective form of the postulate of order, in a *psycho-cosmological axiom*, as we may call it. In fact, his position implies more confidence in his very own *functional* sentiment than in the results to which it leads. That is to say, despite some of his affirmations, the antinomy triumphs by putting the "vote of confidence" in himself, in *his* sentiment before that in God, whom he reaches precisely through sentiment. He has put his confidence in his self-sentiment. Whether the world is a *cosmos* or not is less important for Jacobi than the concrete Man, *hic et nunc*. It is the value of the cosmological axiom as autonomous anthropological postulate. St. Thomas's<sup>17</sup> position is very different, as is that of the entire Christian tradition,<sup>18</sup> when it affirms that we would not believe if we did not obviously see that we *must* believe.

The position of intellectual pride and a-religiosity is thus pointed out as a main feature of philosophical systems. Intellectual pride makes a-religiosity possible, as only he who believes himself to be the measure of all things disassociates himself from Divinity, even if he later establishes its existence because his own heart demands it. Ultimately, it is an inversion of roles, it is human feelings that aspire to condition the Unconditioned—instead of letting

<sup>13</sup> "The fool said in his heart: There is no God [Ps 14] . . . but the wise man said in his heart: There is God."

<sup>14</sup> SW IV.vii. Preface written in 1819, the same year of his death.

<sup>15</sup> SW IV.xiii.

<sup>16</sup> See Willm, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> "Non enim crederit, nisi crederit ea esse credenda vel propter evidentiam signorum, vel propter aliquid huismodi" [he would not believe if he would not believe that those things must be believed, either for the evidence of signs or for some other similar reason] (Thomas, *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.1, a.4, ad 2).

<sup>18</sup> "Nullus quippe credit nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum" [No one would believe if he had not thought it must be believed in, before] (Augustine, *De sanct.* II.5 [PL 44.963]).

themselves be conditioned by Him—thus incurring the accusation that Jacobi himself, in turn, directs toward the rest of philosophical systems.<sup>19</sup> The Jacobian roots of modernism appear clearly at this point. Certainly, all sciences must freely go in search of the truth without letting themselves be coerced by anything, and without worrying about the effects that their results may cause, but it is no less true that this is so precisely because “*bonum et ens convertuntur*,”<sup>20</sup> because Jacobi’s dilemma is not even possible.

Freedom does not mean absolute autonomy or disconnection from other forms of knowledge. Philosophy is considered as *ancilla theologiae*, but even though it maintains independence in its own specific field, it is not up to philosophy to save Man (much less to condemn him to an impassable gulf<sup>21</sup>); neither is it up to reason, and much less sentiment, to act as rector of humanity and its destinies: thus Jacobi’s intent appears more appropriately delineated. To save Man, it is not enough for reason to meet and form a bond with God.

Medieval philosophy tended to *explain* rather than thoroughly *investigate*, starting from scratch. Notwithstanding, however, Jacobi finds himself along the lines of Descartes and Kant, and so on, and everything that has been said falls within the idea of philosophy that this conception implies. Quite a different position is that of those who respond to every single difficulty with a laconic “*respondeo dicendum*.<sup>22</sup> We must not think that it is not the mission of philosophy to *solve* the vital questions of Man. It is not said that philosophy has no right to *want* to solve them, but that it cannot solve them alone; nor is it said that its approach to vital problems is not the most effective or that it does not have the fullest understanding of the solutions (which, perhaps, however, come from elsewhere).

The philosophy of sentiment is a reaction against the lack of love in post-Cartesian philosophy. Once love has been amputated from *philo-Sophia*, when you have developed your feelings more than your faculty of thinking, the former lead you inside each sphere, obviously nearer to the bottom of things, than the latter; and you are then, somehow, a supporter of the philosophy of sentiment. If Jacobi had known how to rationally—dialectically—overcome Spinoza, he would have undoubtedly modified his system.

Though not an original idea of Jacobi’s (Pascal also bases his Catholic apologetics on a dilemma), this consciousness of the *dilemma*, through Jacobi, has direct influence on all later philosophy. And thus, A. Comte speaks of the “fatal dilemma” between Catholicism and positivism as the only “great philosophical struggle”;<sup>23</sup> and all the Oxonian ambience of Cardinal Newman is dominated by this same idea. Newman opted for one part of the alternative; Butler, Huxley, and so forth, for the other.<sup>24</sup>

Bergson’s conception of philosophy itself is dominated by the recognition of the existence of this dilemma in human life, and his solution, as in Jacobi, is in favor of the irrational:

“In presence of commonly held ideas”—Bergson says, recalling Jacobi even in his form—“of theses that seemed obvious, of the affirmations that until now had been considered scientific, it [intuition, or the image as intermediary] suggests to the ear of the philosopher the word: *impossible*. Impossible, even when facts and reasons

<sup>19</sup> See *SW* III.48.

<sup>20</sup> *Good* and *being* are interchangeable.

<sup>21</sup> See Lk 16:26.

<sup>22</sup> As St. Thomas used to replying to objections.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Comte to Mill, May 15, 1845.

<sup>24</sup> See J. Guitton, *La philosophie de Newman* (Paris, 1933), xxviii ff.

appear to lead you to believe that it is possible, real and true. Impossible because certain experiences, confusing, perhaps, but decisive, tell you through my voice that it [rational criteria!] is incompatible with the alleged facts and with the given reasons."<sup>25</sup>

### The Integration of Sentiment

*Was gut ist sagt dem Menschen unmittelbar und allein sein Herz.*<sup>26</sup>

SW V.115

#### *Definition of Philosophy*

The integration of sentiment into philosophy reverts into a general set of problems about philosophy, as it is the result of an organization of diverse human ingredients so that, in mutual collaboration, they may obtain the most complete possible *vision* that Man can reach by his natural forces of the entire universe, God and Man included.

We cannot ignore the fact that philosophy is a *vision*, that is, ultimately, knowledge. The problem then consists in knowing if feelings really are a form of knowledge.

It is understandable that, according to how philosophy is defined, feelings will either be included or excluded from its field, not as one of its objects, but rather as a directive instrument; but then everything would seemingly be an arbitrary problem of definition. Yet philosophy is not an entity that can be defined *a priori*, but rather a reality to be exactly delimited on the basis of that which it truly claims to be and must be. Because this is a very complex problem, however contiguous to the central aim of this study, we only describe the proposed definition of philosophy schematically.

Initially, and in a very wide sense—that we later have to limit—we may understand by philosophy *Reality's opening up* to Man or, in other words, *knowledge of the Ultimate Reality*. By specifying *ultimate* reality, we are already limiting its field in order to also leave room for the rest of the sciences, without prejudging the structure of such reality.

The object that is specific to philosophy will condition its methodology; that is to say, the object will only truly open itself up to us if we approach it with the proper instrument. But we cannot know the object exactly before having the adequate method to apprehend it. That is, even if it is true that the structure of Reality must condition our method of approaching it, this structure is unknowable until we come in contact with it. What then are our points of contact, our bridges to reach Reality? A Reality that, for the time being, does not have to be transcendent with regard to our being? Everything is thus reduced to the question of our forms or modes of knowledge of the Real.

Specifically, these forms of knowledge are multiple, although unitary with reference to their subject, and insofar as they are knowledge, that is, apprehension of something as "another." Because they are multiple, it is fully justified that we use them to apprehend the ultimate structure of Reality; but because the knowing subject is unitary and . . . analogously (!) knowledge, there must be an intrinsic relationship and a hierarchical order between all these diverse forms.

This hierarchy can be valued from a twofold point of view, insofar as it makes us penetrate more deeply into the entrails of Reality or insofar as it necessarily accompanies us and makes

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by Maritain in his *Intuition and Conceptualization*.

<sup>26</sup> "What is good is revealed to Man immediately, and only, by his own heart."

us able to use the rest of our means of knowledge. That is to say, primacy may be considered as of the object, insofar as more real and profound, or as of the subject, insofar as that which is most proper and characteristic of Man. In the first case, the order would be: beatific vision, mystical knowledge, faith, intellectual intuition, reason, *feelings* (?), and senses. In the second case, the hierarchy is different and primacy indisputably belongs to reason.

However, the adduced list is not homogeneous. Strictly speaking, there is a supernatural knowledge that, according to its varying degree of development, can be faith, mystical experience, or beatific vision; afterward, intellectual knowledge that comprises intuition and reason, and finally sensible knowledge in charge of Man's external and internal senses. Do feelings represent a separate category, or are they included in the second or third degree? This is the problem.

Given philosophy's all-encompassing existence, we are not able to ignore any possible contribution to the knowledge of Reality. Now, the twofold order we have mentioned results in two different concepts of philosophy. From the first point of view, philosophy is the contemplation of Truth, and this is what the philosopher aspires to;<sup>27</sup> but not all people admit the hierarchy that this conception implies, as many of them do not possess supernatural forms of knowledge, and even deny their existence. This is why we must limit ourselves to the second point of view, by virtue of the same all-encompassing aspiration of philosophy. Nevertheless, unanimity does not rule this second perspective, and the disparity reaches its highest point when it must characterize the essential instrument of philosophy, which we have already termed "reason."

In this sense, philosophy would be a *rational knowledge of ultimate reality*; but because it is more a goal to achieve than an acquired knowledge, it could be more exactly defined as a *rational investigation of ultimate reality*. Or even better, according to our previous remarks, and eliminating any rationalistic vice: *rational explanation of ultimate reality*.

In classical language, the formal *quo*-object is generically and specifically delimited by the first two concepts respectively: it is an investigation, or, better yet, an *explanation of rational type*. The formal *quod*-object is *ultimate Reality*, hidden in reality and extracted from it by reason. The material object, in turn, is expressed by the final concept: *reality*.

If it is *investigation*, it is not therefore either faith or direct vision, or intuition. It is differentiated from all religion. If it is *rational investigation*, not only insofar as process but also insofar as principle, then it is distinguished from sentimentalism and art, as well as from theology.

Let it not be said that we have eliminated philosophy's greatest interest with this definition, its vital palpitation, its human transcendence. In the first place, philosophy's aspirations cannot be exaggerated by virtue of the (personal) concerns of philosophers. Philosophy is not everything in human life, nor can it substitute religion, art, or even life itself. But, in the second place, to speak of philosophy as knowledge does not mean to degrade it. Knowledge is not a mere function, or an instrument, or the result of life, but rather the root that sustains it. Knowledge is life; it is the most profound vital dimension of Being (*νοησίς νοησεως*<sup>28</sup>). And the most perfect human fulfillment of this root of life is philosophy. This is a point that modern existentialism is aware of, yet does not quite dominate. Reason asserts, it illuminates the preexisting vital and radical data of our existence; but this instrument with which we illuminate our life is also, unavoidably, an integral part of our own selves and a manifestation of one of our most peculiar structures.

<sup>27</sup> "Verus philosophus est amator Dei" [true philosopher is he who loves God], says Augustine lapidarily in *De Civitate Dei* VIII.1.

<sup>28</sup> "Knowledge of knowledge": the Aristotelian definition of God.

Because it is about *Reality*, we can exclude from philosophy all those false philosophies that mystify the reality of things. And by limiting its field in saying that it only deals with *ultimate Reality*, it is differentiated from the rest of the particular sciences that also investigate rationally, but only a more or less epidermal aspect of this same *Reality*.

Incidentally, it is important to note the instrumental character of philosophy, which can be deduced from the given definition, and which can easily be highlighted in accordance with the traditional concept, without needing to turn to modern existential irrationalism. Reason explains, expresses in an organic and congruent—though neither closed-off nor complete—system what life offers. Furthermore, the analysis of life's data also belongs to it; an analysis that is explanation, but not creation of data, or absolute rational assimilation of data either.

But recalling that the origin of this function comes from considering reason as the essential—and not integral—instrument of philosophy, we cannot forget the role of other forms of knowledge and their collaboration with rational knowledge. Here we must distinguish suprarational from infrarational forms. The integration of the former is radically different from that of the latter. The foremost set of problems refers to faith, to theology, to the autonomy of reason and of philosophy, and so on, that is, questions that do not belong to this study. The second genre of integration is the one that we are now interested in drawing attention to: the relationship between reason and the other inferior forms of knowledge.

#### *The Mission of Sentiment*

Now, are feelings, strictly speaking, a form of knowledge? That is, can feelings be integrated within philosophy, as some sort of servants of reason, in such a way that without the latter losing its primacy, it sees itself aided and completed by them? In other words, is there a special sphere of being which only opens itself up to feelings, in such a way that reason, without their help, inevitably ends up truncated in its attempt to explain all of reality?

This implicit set of problems possesses a special peculiarity. There are two opposite conceptions throughout history that, although consistent with each other, conceal certain incongruence in their core. On the one hand, those who defend the irreducibility of feelings in the face of the two classical intellectual faculties, intelligence and will, have to accept feelings as a specifically human *tertium quid*, that is, unless they degrade them to the purely animal sphere against all psychological introspection. But in this case, if we group all human forms of knowledge within intelligence, feelings cannot be knowing, and therefore they are not valid instruments for philosophy, for the apprehension of what is real. And let it not be said that reality is given immediately without any kind of knowledge, as this is a nominal discussion, since any apprehension of "something as another" is knowledge. This is the predominant position in the nineteenth century, made classical by Kant and disseminated in the eighteenth century by Christian Wolff.

On the other hand, there is the classical opinion, common until the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, of considering the intelligence-will dualism within Man's spiritual sphere, in contrast to sensibility as belonging to his animal nature. In this case, there are two possible interpretations of feelings, one rationalist and the other voluntarist. The former is general in the modern philosophy of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz: sentiment is, basically, knowledge, and thus the affirmation of its intentionality; but it constitutes a dark and perplexing knowledge. This is the rationalist point of view. Maternal love is, for Leibniz, the blurred conception that it is good to love the fruits of one's own womb. Spinoza's predominant psychological theme is to demonstrate that the origin of passions lies in knowledge. The second trend is the traditional one in medieval times and in late Scholastic realism. Feelings/

sentiments, though complex and a combination of animal and spiritual elements (intellect and will), are manifested predominantly as appetites.

The alluded-to incongruence lies in the fact that it is precisely the philosophers of the first posture who claim to found a philosophy of sentiment; while those of the second point of view, in their rationalist faction—in fact, also many traditional thinkers—disregard the possibility of integrating feelings and sentiments within philosophy.

This incongruence is what Scheler<sup>29</sup> does not see when, from the Descartes-Spinoza-Leibniz tradition until the beginning of the nineteenth century, he accepts the existence of intentional sentiments and rejects their irreducibility to reason; and when, on the other hand, he accepts the irreducibility of the emotional being to reason that the nineteenth century defends, and affirms the characteristic of intentionality that this century consequently denied.

What, then, are sentiments? Current philosophical thought has sharpened its sight in order to distinguish the diverse spheres of being and, in consequence, the different strata of the human being, and it finds almost no difficulty in characterizing feelings/sentiments phenomenologically. The problem appears more acute when we have to discuss their metaphysical nature.

The first delimitation of the sentimental sphere is given with the anthropological surplus that remains after having excluded that which, beyond all doubt, belongs to sensibility and to the superior—intellectual and volitional—powers. In the middle, like some remnant that participates at once of the peculiarities of the two extremes, is where we find the human sentimental stratum.

Thence the complexity of this human sentimental layer, in which we find everything that does not fit either into the intellectual or the sensible spheres. This is the reason why psychology does not usually define feelings and sentiments precisely.<sup>30</sup> Sometimes they appear to be synonyms of affections and emotions, and other times, on the contrary, they are considered types of these,<sup>31</sup> or even vice versa.<sup>32</sup>

With the sole purpose of establishing a univocal nomenclature, what we call here *sentiment* is the most simple, plain, and perhaps irreducible, elemental nucleus within the complex human affective and emotional range. This does not mean that there are no multifarious and complicated sentiments as well; the only thing we wish to make clear is that the elements of Man's affective life are—by definition—sentiments. From this point of view, if sentiments are reducible within the metaphysical plane to other and more simple units, this is much more true in the case of affections and emotions, which are decidedly more complex.

A metaphysical definition of sentiment is the point of arrival and it cannot constitute the point of departure of an investigation about the nature of sentiment, as this primarily occurs

<sup>29</sup> See his *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*.

<sup>30</sup> And thus we do not find a clear and precise definition in a work as fundamental, on the other hand, as that by J. Fröbes, *Tratado de psicología empírica y experimental* (Madrid, 1944).

<sup>31</sup> This is what Fröbes writes literally: "The elemental sentiment is an element of emotions, such as we experience it in wrath, in love, in fear, etc.; and it is precisely the emotional element, e.g., the pleasure that comes with a sweet taste" (op. cit., I:200).

<sup>32</sup> "The word 'feeling' is broadly applied to psychic states in which pleasure or displeasure appears. We can understand it either in a wide sense, as meaning the group of all those states in which there is pleasure; this mainly happens when in the aforementioned state the *emotional element* predominates ... or the word is specified to mean the *emotional element*, an abstraction made up of representations. We understand it here in the latter sense" (Fröbes, loc. cit.).

in the human psychological sphere—which is where its intimate essence must be discovered before going on to further generalizations.

But since we are not conducting a psychological analysis of sentiment here, or even an anthropological study of it, but rather a metaphysical vision of its nature in order to elucidate the concrete problem we have posed, we merely expose the problem schematically, and stop once we reach the ontological dimension.

A great part of modern discussions on sentiments are due to a healthy attempt to reevaluate these, because of the belief that they have been completely neglected in classical philosophical systems. And sentiments have certainly been excluded from post-Cartesian rationalism. Traditional philosophy has resorted to sentimental exaggeration, since the exact and correct assessment of feelings has not been understood. If we identify intellect and reason, and only consider cold reason and sensibility, then Scheler is right in his criticism of the exclusion of sentiments from philosophy;<sup>33</sup> but this corresponds neither to the reality of things nor to historical truth.<sup>34</sup>

Human intelligence is not mere reasoning, as it is also, and above all else, intuition; nor is Man's will a categorical decision, as, before this, it is appetite and love. Correctly interpreted, these two human powers in their full psychological complexity and their profound metaphysical connection leave no room for a *third spiritual faculty*. One thing is that, anthropologically, sentiment does not possess certain irreducibility, as a compact crystallization—with its own laws—of affection, knowledge, and sensibility; and that there is not a metaphysical sentimental dimension; another thing is that sentiments do not have psychological unity and consistency. These are two different planes. One thing can be anthropologically irreducible and, however, not be so from a greater ontological depth. The existence of metaphysical elements does not justify atomism in psychology. That is to say, sentiments in Man may very well have their own individuality and consistency, without the need of having to be a metaphysically irreducible ingredient of human nature. But there is still much more. Certainly, in the metaphysical sphere there is no third faculty parallel to the other two; but it is still feasible to find a place for sentiments in the later and more profound unification of the same two primary powers of all intellectual natures: intelligence and will. This would allow for a metaphysical interpretation of sentiments and grant them an ontological dimension; but before this, we must go a little bit deeper into an anthropological analysis.

We must correctly understand the twofold polarity clarified below. We are trying to find the metaphysical roots of sentiment, the *primum analogatum* in the deepest depths of the spiritual being. From this point of view, sentiments are going to be absolute perfection; though in the anthropological sphere and throughout the path to reach this concept, sentiments undeniably possess a concomitant and—in the strict sense—accidental characteristic that makes them seem like an imperfection.

In this last sense, sentiments lie neither in the body nor in the soul, but rather in their combination, in human unity itself.<sup>35</sup> They are in the psychological plane. Hence the fact that they emerge in the conjunction of body and soul. If we admit to the trilogy of spirit, soul, and body, sentiments would correspond to the soul—understanding, in this case, the

<sup>33</sup> See M. Scheler, op. cit., 118.

<sup>34</sup> See for example, the already classic work by P. Rousselot, *L'intellectualisme de Saint Thomas* (Paris, 1936).

<sup>35</sup> "Per se passio convenit composito" [passion / passivity belongs to compounds *in se*] (Thomas, *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.22, a.1, ad 3). However, we have already said that sentiment cannot be identified with passion.

soul as the seat of those phenomena which are neither purely spiritual (in their essence, as in their exercise Man does not possess pure spiritual activities) nor exclusively corporeal. In short, the seat of sentiments is found where human unity is best manifested.

Despite constituting a certain psychological unity, we can distinguish several integral moments in human sentiments: an *event*, an intellectual (memory, idea, etc.) or sensible stimulation; a more or less intense organic *tension* in which our entire being, as a unity, takes part; and a *reaction* (movement of inclination, repulsion, disgust, etc.).<sup>36</sup> Ultimately: sensibility, appetite, intellection, and volition—that is, a combination of the four metaphysical elements.

Thus the relationship between sentiments and our very human unity, and the role that the former have by providing material to the intellect for the intellectual knowledge of the soul itself. Since being is not revealed to us through sentiments, the latter are not—in themselves—intentional; although, because they are concomitant both to knowledge as well as to will, they can trigger, by virtue of psychological laws, new actions by these two spiritual powers, which, without that particular sentiment, would not have been produced. In this sense, sentiments carry out a preponderant mission in our relationship to reality. Through them we acquire a greater unification with things and external situations, which allows us to reach a fuller *intellectual* assimilation of reality.

Let us think of so-called knowledge by connaturality, in which the necessary assimilation for all knowledge is not only internal but also extrinsic, and more full; that is, not only does our cognitive power join the intelligible nucleus of the known thing, but a greater part of our being vibrates in harmony with the known object.

Essentially, sentiments are the repercussion of the superior functions of our intellectual nature in our living and unitary organism. There is never either pure intellection or simple volition within us. Every action of a faculty has a vital resonance in the very same substance of the living being. Sentiments are, properly speaking, the harmonics concomitant to our spiritual actions. They are the impurities that accompany intellectual joy and pain, with the special characteristic that that which is concomitant of an idea or a volition can be a psychological evocation of other spiritual actions.

Sentiments find themselves predominantly within appetite; this is the reason why they are first triggered by goodness rather than by truth. They are one of the external bridges which join our will with our intelligence. Hence the suggestive, though not cognitive, function of sentiments; and consequently, also, their intimate relationship to beauty as their specific organ, since beauty provides reason of goodness and, simultaneously, of truth. The *existential* clash (since in the *essential* order they coincide as transcendentals) between goodness and truth originates in beauty.

With this we reach the specific problem we are interested in here: sentiments and their relationship to human knowledge. Sentiments as such are not cognitive; that is, they do not represent a form of knowledge that is different from the intellectual and the sensible. Now, in the first place, sentiments possess a sensible or intellectual cognitive ingredient. This is why there are sentiments that *in fact* provide knowledge, as they are attached to it. But, in the second place, the opposite is also true; namely, that there is knowledge that comes tinted by emotion, since we have *de facto* come to it through sentiments. But even in this case, *simpliciter per prius* there is knowledge.

This explains the sentimental-cognitive concatenation. Man is not pure intellect, and in the same way that his intellectual knowledge has a psychological commencement in sentiment,

<sup>36</sup> See A. Gemelli, *Emozioni e sentimenti* (Regensburg, 1930), 898. He includes a fourth element in the mechanism of affective life: "instinct, along whose line emotion unfolds."

it can also be influenced by sentiment. Better yet, many times knowledge is coated in sentimental forms, that is, by complex repercussions of our entire psychic organism. This is why just as there is no gestation of intellectual knowledge independently of the sensible, there is also no intellectual knowledge, in its regular exercise, free of a sentimental echo, an echo that frequently takes temporal priority over the pure original note, and also more intensity.

Thus, sentiments can be a psychological source of knowledge in the sense that we may extract from them the cognitive vein that is sheltered in their core. They are precious aids in the association of ideas. We can now understand why the expression *form of knowledge* can be wrongly interpreted in an ontological sense, as if sentiments were a new human type of apprehension of the Real; a new form, a new way, that has been rejected in a merely psychological sense, to reach a—univocally intellectual—knowledge of things, the only form that can and must be accepted. What is then defended is not only the influence of sentiments on our judgment, as daily life experience gives evidence of, but also their very influence on our simple apprehensions.

Sentiments trigger much knowledge and many connections between things that constitute precious material for our systematic and complete construction of the world. Philosophy must always bear sentiments in mind, as it must integrate all of the data that the senses provide about reality in order to extract the intelligible content that lies *virtually* in sentimental data and *potentially* in sensible data. Intelligible content only exists potentially in sensible data—sensibility is not intellectual knowledge—while there is an intelligible nucleus virtually—that is, implicitly but really existent—in sentimental experience.

However, this parallelism goes no further. While the intellect reflects on the object of sensible knowledge in the case of intellectual knowing, in sentimental experience we are conscious, not of the object, but of the specific modality of the action in question through which the object is revealed to us.

Furthermore, sentiments essentially entail knowledge and appetite, and specifically *knowledge of an appetite*. This does not mean that all knowledge of an appetite is already a sentiment, nor that the—psychological—origin of sentiment lies along these same lines, but rather that in the analysis of sentiments there is always a certain knowledge of an appetite.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, all sentiments are in a certain way conscious. Before reaching the threshold of consciousness, there is a lack that nobody can deny; it could be a tendency, an inclination, an appetite, but not a sentiment. In every sentiment there is knowledge, even if this is not enough, naturally, to constitute it. Let us be clear: we are not identifying sentiments with the consciousness that is a reflection of their existence, nor with their knowledge as such, but rather we are saying that feelings and sentiments do not emerge until Man knows, in some way, the force of the tendency that lies in their base. According to whether this cognitive ingredient is sensible or intellectual, feelings will be inferior or superior. Animals also possess the former; the latter are peculiar to Man.

Now, psychologically, sentiments are a peculiar and *sui generis* reaction of the entire organism in the face of a special type of knowledge, in the face of the consciousness of *our own* inclinations. Knowledge can be about things that are foreign to the knowing subject: this is classical knowledge. But there is also a twofold self-knowledge; reflection, that is, knowledge that knows itself, and a second type of knowing oneself, insofar as the human subject comes to know another part of him/herself. This is a self-knowledge in which the

<sup>37</sup> This can explain why the Scholastics seemingly gave so little speculative importance—and this must be underlined—to sentiments; they never even found a specific name for them. They were included in the different “appetites” we know. Psychology, on the other hand, was not as developed as it is today.

*αὐτος* (self-) is not the cognitive power per se, but rather the knowing subject. This is the reversion of the intelligence on the intelligent subject.

It is understandable that in this knowledge of our being, when the knowing subject becomes aware of his own inclinations, of his volitions, he is not able to remain in the same *αταράξια*<sup>38</sup> as when he knows other objects in which he is not so vitally invested and in which his own destiny is not put into play. This is the case when what is known has vital repercussions on our entire being, and this is what originates a sentiment. I may know that Man is mortal, and even that I share in this condition; but, at a given moment, I may become aware, not of this objective fact that concerns me, but of *my own* expiration date, *my own* disintegration, *my own* walking on a path toward death, *my own* tendency toward non-being as a psycho-physical unity. Then this, *my own* knowledge, is something more than a mere realization; it is my own personal inclination toward death made conscious, it is the angst of ceasing to be, it is the fear of death, the feeling of agony. The appetite has become conscious; and in my own becoming aware of the abyss toward which my being is headed, the feeling of death has emerged, which is very different than the mere knowledge of the same. The classical Christian meditation on death has precisely this objective: to turn all that in Man is mere knowledge into sentiment—a superior and pure sentiment.

The typical feeling of *nostalgia* is also a good example of what we have been saying. *Nostalgia* means feeling an absence; but what is not present cannot be felt, as is logical. But we must not reject logic and say that feelings are not governed by it. It is one thing for our affections to not follow laws that are logically deducible, and another thing altogether to say that even reason, in its study of logic, has lost the immutable and constitutive laws of its reasoning. What happens is that we feel the void that something that was present in our spirit, that—in one way or another—has occupied our soul, has left. This is not a mere memory, but rather an urge, a longing (conscious appetite) of once again possessing what we no longer possess. *Nostalgia* is a conscious tendency toward something we have possessed and is now absent, triggered by an implicit or explicit memory. It must be noted that the tendency as such is what is conscious, and not its terminus or object.<sup>39</sup>

Hence the central and unifying position that all knowledge holds. It seems as if the cognitive and the appetitive had fused into a superior unity.

We can see the wide-ranging importance of this unifying function of sentiments, if we consider that the dimension of "appetibility" on which Man's knowledge reverts in order to originate sentiments is not only constituted by our will and our animal tendencies, but rather by the dynamism of the whole Man, including his cognitive powers. That is to say, that the appetite on which sentiments may build could be the same cognitive appetite. There is, in this sense, a sentiment of ignorance, an intellectual concern, and even a metaphysical sentiment. In this case, sentiments would be *consciousness of the very dynamism of being*; this is why they put us in contact with our most remote substantial nucleus. Through sentiments Man, this small part of the cosmos, feels linked to the entire universe, because by means of feelings he auscultates the palpitations in his own being, the natural appetite for God that underlies every creature.

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The distinction between sensible and intellectual knowledge and between inferior and superior (infrarational and volitional) tendencies allows an initial classification of feelings.

<sup>38</sup> Imperturbability.

<sup>39</sup> See a more elaborate example in my "La confidencia. Análisis de un sentimiento," *Arbor* 25 (1948).

Sensible perception of my infrarational inclinations constitute the ground of the lowest feelings that we share with animals. Hunger, thirst, terror, and so on belong to this group.

There is no room for sensible perception of my superior tendencies, as there is a radical inadequacy that is impossible to surmount. In any case, a sensible echo of my volitional tendencies is, in a certain way, thinkable, but then what is known sensibly is not the voluntary tendency, but rather the organic repercussion of the intellectual inclination. Because this knowledge, although sensible, is specific to Man due to his mediated spiritual cause, it is able to originate a series of sentiments that are very similar to the prior ones, but with specific differential motives that do not come from the intervention of intelligence (third group) but from the volitional origin of that organic movement whose sensible knowledge gives place to the sentiment in question. There are forms of fear, fright, comfort, intimacy, and so on that clearly belong to this group.

There is, then, a third group of feelings also characteristic of Man, produced by the intellection of our inferior appetites. In this category we find all those sentiments, so developed in present-day novels, in which Man is portrayed as a refined animal. The entire scope of sentiments—more or less sensual or degraded—of which only Man is capable belongs here. The overcoming and idealization of our sensible movements also pertains to this category. The phenomena of human sexual love, both in its inferior and in its superior elements, is an example of these feelings.

Intellectual knowledge of my voluntary movements possesses a twofold dimension, whether these movements are free or not. In the first case, they produce the rich and varied scope of human sentiments, strictly speaking, which depend on the innumerable classes of people. The different forms of *nostalgia*, longing, jealousy, aesthetic pleasure, and so on belong here. The second case includes fundamental human sentiments whose special tonality and particular concretions are received from the first case. That is to say, those general sentiments due to the invariant nature of our will are specified in the free movement of this same will toward a concrete and particular good, giving place to the sentiments of the first case. Among these fundamental sentiments we find bliss, as fulfillment of our thirst for happiness; and concern, as fear of not fulfilling that very thirst, in all its typical modalities: fear, angst, dread, and so on.

Naturally, these sentiments do not necessarily have to always appear in their pure form; on the contrary, in accordance with their unifying and central characteristics, they usually present themselves mixed up, forming more or less autonomous unities. The so-called aesthetic feeling, for example, participates in the last two groups, predominating in one according to the suppositions of the subject and the nature of the specific art that is contemplated.

Although in every feeling there is a hint of interiority, of consciousness of one's own intimacy, in inferior feelings there is, above all, predominance of the mere sensation of liking or disliking—which seems to lie outside of what we have said so far. But this pair of categories—liking and disliking—which are seemingly characteristic of feeling, are, ultimately, nothing but the complex result of the fusion of our cognitive faculty with our volitional power. In the same way that within sensibility there is room for pain and pleasure, not when something is merely felt, but when what is felt reverberates, penetrates, influences, modifies something more than our sensible organs (anesthesia eliminates pain); similarly, liking and disliking are fruit of the repercussion of our being in our cognitive faculty.

After making this classification, it is worth asking if angels do not also have sentiments from the fourth group, since we can also distinguish in them intelligence from will. This leads us to a greater development of the concept of sentiments. If we consider that what is essential about sentiments is constituted by the unification of intellect and will, then clearly

angels and God himself have sentiments. If, on the contrary, we defend that the essential constituent of sentiments is given by the repercussion in our entire organism of the internal knowledge of our tendencies, not as an external experience, but rather as the repercussion of the same, then angels do not have sentiments.

What corresponds to our sentiments in them is the full intellection of their volitional tendencies. Man's appetitive side is not comprehensible to himself in a complete, clear, and transparent way. Man knows that he wants, and he is aware of his volitions (sentiments) but he does not know exactly *what* he wants, and he knows the motives that trigger his inclinations even less. In the factual situation of Man, fallen and damaged by original sin, Truth has hidden from his intelligence, but, though it is difficult to reach, it is not completely inaccessible. Goodness, on the other hand, has shattered into a thousand pieces, each one of which attracts the corresponding portion of our complex human nature.

This is precisely where sentiments lie, in the unification of a particular goodness, end of a desire, and the knowledge, more or less profound, of the same. This is why sentiments always possess an axiological charge; on the other hand, for the same reason, if we fully admit an ethics of values, we can only apprehend values sentimentally.

Axiological ethics, in fact, is not based on an ultimate end for Man that conditions the morality of his actions according to a transcendental relationship with a supreme norm, but rather on the discovery of the innumerable goods that populate the world of the spirit, and how Man apprehends them. But, by virtue of what we have said, the knowledge of these partial goods generates different sentiments within us.

But the simple natures of separated substances<sup>40</sup> do not belong here. Nothing but absolute Goodness exists for them as the end of their appetition; this is also the reason why, if they stray, they commit a sin that fully inverts the sign of their existence. This is the case of the angelical sin as described in the Christian revelation. In angels there is, therefore, a supersentiment that consists in perfect self-intellection, insofar as their entire intellectual nature, will included, is transparent to itself. It is conscious love, *amor intellectualis*, affectionate amorous vision, pure sentiment, fruit of the full interpenetration between their mind and will.

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After everything we have said, it will be relatively easy to take up the problems we have avoided up to now on the metaphysical interpretation of sentiment.

We have repeatedly alluded to the unitary character of sentiments, their peculiar unifying attribute, as if they melted into a superior unity that our powers carry out more or less autonomously. Now then, we do not find in the ontological analysis of beings any peculiar sentimental power that could be placed next to the two spiritual faculties of intellectual natures.

All beings are beset by a double dynamism: centripetal and centrifugal. Because of the former, beings are not isolated from the rest of the universe and they are sensitive to extrinsic influences that come from the rest of beings. From the mere reactionability of matter to knowledge, passing through impressionability: all this belongs to this characteristic that is common to all beings and that adopts peculiar nuances according to each diverse nature. The second force that animates all beings is relative to tendencies: it moves toward its own perfection, and ultimately toward God. The range of appetites, from will to matter's almost completely passive tendency, belongs to this dynamism.

In the complex nature of Man, who is the point of encounter of all creation, the diverse ontic spheres meet, and each one preserves its own modalities. Naturally, Man is a unity, but he is neither a simple unity nor a perfect one, relative to the multiplicity of parts. He is

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<sup>40</sup> Angels.

a composed and imperfect unity. Man is one although he is made up of many parts, and is still without complete unification. Man's diverse ontic layers are not fully subsumed by the superior part, that to which primacy corresponds, by nature. This could be explained, if you will, by original sin.

In this sense we find in Man, corresponding to his superior nature: intelligence and will. Subsidiary to his inferior part, we find: sensibility and appetite. However, further underlining human unity, this same classification can be summarized in the dualism to which we referred earlier: *knowledge*, on the one hand, be it sensible or intellectual (and commonly human, that is, a combination of both); and *appetite*, on the other, both sensible and intellectual.

But these metaphysical dimensions, common to all beings and actually different in Man, neither remove nor eliminate a substantial human unity. It is human substance that is at once volitional and cognitive. And precisely, a third dynamic dimension is not possible, such as a third movement that implies the entire being, but what is possible is a static condition, a dimension of self-possession, of unification of both faculties in one superior synthesis. In the perfection of our nature—in the vision of God—it will not happen that our two spiritual powers will tend independently toward God and will be filled by Him, but rather our very substance, in a unique, superior action, a synthesis of knowledge and will—Truth and Goodness—will *enjoy* God and will have all of its perfective potential fulfilled. Knowledge of our appetite will exist to the greatest degree, insofar as the entire human substance will be conscious (and in this consciousness it will be united with *Truth*) of attaining its End, absolute *Goodness*. In this state of perfection, there will not be a *cognitio* but rather a *gaudium de Veritate*; there will not be an *inclinatio* toward the end, but a *fruition Boni*.

In this sense, sentiment, considered metaphysically, would be the most perfect action that nature is capable of, the unification of the two spiritual powers into one unique action, simultaneously amorous and cognitive. This is the amorous knowledge of which mysticism and theology speak. This unification is only possible in nature's state of perfection. This is why God and angels would have, properly in this eminent sense, the purest sentiments.

In the earthly domain, on the other hand, sentiments will appear like an echo of our radical unity, and they will be demonstrated in the repercussion that our (intellectual or sensible) knowledge causes in the dimension that marks our (superior or inferior) tendencies, or vice versa, thanks to the fact that both dimensions of the human being originate in a more profound radical unity, through which the sentimental vibration itself is transmitted.

Sentiment's ultimate reason would then lie in the unification of intellect and will, even though its sublunary<sup>41</sup> psychological reason resides in the whole echo of any superior or inferior function of the human being.

Hence the dualism, the tension that we observe in feelings/sentiments. On the one hand, they appear to be something imperfect, unfinished, bordering the animal, something that cannot be valued as a norm for proper human action; as something that we possess, but that we must strive to overcome and not let them overstep their mark. Let us think of feelings as synonymous to passions. But on the other hand, we have the unavoidable impression that, despite this imperfection, there is in sentiments a hidden nucleus that is much nobler, something that makes it very hard to simply disregard them and to cease considering that, essentially, sentiments are right, and that whoever lets themselves be carried away by the deepest and most central impulses of their being does not err but rather possess the greatness of he who acts by connaturality with the most authentic layers of his being and of the entire

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<sup>41</sup> Earthly.

universe.<sup>42</sup> Poetic and artistic reception and perception in general, through the medium of sentiments, resists being considered an imperfection.

The explanation is now obvious. Sentiments are in themselves a perfection that breaks through Man only under a layer of impurity and imperfection. They are the unification of Man's powers that only manifest themselves on earth as a weak and imprecise echo and, as such, inferior to the complete and determined actions of the intellect and the will. The ultimate reason of sentiments is a perfection, but their human manifestation is an insufficiency, a weak and inadequate reflection of the most perfect human action. Here is where a disquisition on art, its cathartic function, and so on, could begin.

In this sense, sentiments would be the perfect action of our intellectual nature, the synthesis of the cognitive and volitional action in a true intellectual pleasure, in an intelligent wanting, in the *perfect love*; but, as such, this can only be outlined here on earth. And like in the evangelical paradox that, in order to reach Life, you have to die,<sup>43</sup> so it is that in order to achieve sentimental perfection, you must follow the dictates of reason in philosophy. Sentiments are good and indispensable companions but bad advisers, as we undertake a pilgrimage through the planet and we are still subject to the influence of particular goods that have become divorced from Goodness.

Obviously, we cannot tackle the profound and classical problem of intellectualism-voluntarism that we have outlined here merely with a few of words; but we have already been able to see that the direction we have followed tends toward an overcoming of the traditional dualism in favor of a greater unification of the nuclear action of our nature, prior to its division into faculties, although without annulling these, especially when dealing with our terrestrial life. However, intellect is not dethroned from its primacy. Love is not our formal constitutive insofar as love, the perfect action that fills us, is the fruit and consequence of the *vision* that possesses Goodness. Only God can constitutively define himself as love.<sup>44</sup> But let us return to the subject of this study.

With all this, the mission of sentiments in philosophy clearly appears. It is like a dark bearer of intellections and tendencies in a complex but tight unity. This is why much intelligible material is not shown to us clearly unless it is through sentiments. In the same way that our first intellections need sensible data in order to be activated, other, more complex receptions only present themselves to our pure intelligence if, spontaneously, our sentiments place us in a *disposition* of being opened to those spheres of being, without our sentiments as such having to be cognitive. We admit, then, all of the phenomenology of affective life and the valuable psychological analysis of our emotions and feelings. We reject, on the other hand, an independent ontological interpretation of our classical faculties of (sensible and intellectual) knowledge and of (animal and rational) appetite.

The function of philosophy appears, with this, clear and precise, even though it is not easy: to develop, to discover the intelligible structure of reality with the help of all the natural means that Man has at his disposal. Properly understood, it is not about considering that there is a part of reality that is unintelligible to us, and therefore unreachable. This does not imply that there is a part of reality that is unintelligible *per se* and therefore inaccessible, but rather that what is limited is our cognitive capacity, which, because it has no direct intuition of Being, must reach Being through its imperfect means of knowledge. It is not that we extract

<sup>42</sup> Let us recall Goethe's affirmation, "Der Mensch in seinen tiefsten Drängen ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst!" [In his deepest instincts, Man is perfectly aware of the right path.]

<sup>43</sup> See Jn 12:24.

<sup>44</sup> See 1 Jn 4:8.

the intelligible part of reality; we rather appeal to all of our means of cognition in order to achieve the greatest possible intelligibility of Being.

It goes without saying that what we have stated does not contradict—as it lies in a deeper layer—a certain antirationalist current that manifests itself in many attempts of a moral and religious type in favor of a greater approximation to the concrete and the vital. One thing does not cancel the other one out. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that in this critique to cold rationalism the much warmer and passionate Thomist intellectualism is also included, at least nominally.<sup>45</sup> It is completely true that we cannot ignore the concrete, that speculation is not life, that what is vital must captivate our interest, that cold reason is not suitable to guide Man, that a morality made up of concepts alone is not acceptable to lead humanity... but all of these fair observations neither contradict nor even slightly touch upon the fact that our spiritual nature possesses two faculties with which to face all the concrete missions presented to it: intellect and will. Intelligence is a more or less perfect *vision* of Being. Will is a more or less free *tendency* toward Being. Intelligence is *union* with Being. Will is *love* of Being, path to *union*. *Union* is pure (act of) "feeling," as it is not still possible to tend toward that which one already possesses, or to know "as other" that which is already in oneself, but only to *feel* the real and immediate contact with Divinity: a feeling (and more precisely, a sentiment) that is a fusion of love and knowledge.

#### *Intellectual Intuition*

With all this we have pointed to a problem that is immediately related to the philosophy of sentiment. Often people, and even concepts themselves—inevitably partial and truncated with regard to the reality they attempt to refer to—seem to want to disregard the need to descend to the plain, bare problem that they are there to solve. The biggest problem of the philosophy of sentiment is not, strictly speaking, sentiment, but rather that which sentiments have come to replace: intellectual intuition. Sometimes we say *sentiment* but we are thinking *intellectual intuition*; we write *affection* and yet we mean *intuition*. We have appealed to sentiments so that they may provide that which reason cannot give. And therein lies the fundamental error—and the correctness—of sentimentalism. There is error in turning to sentimentalism; there is correctness in rejecting rationalism; and there is imprecision in mistaking sentiment for intellectual intuition.

Essentially, this is the problem that Kant was concerned with and that constitutes the axis of Jacobi's entire speculation. Since then, it has been widely discussed, and its solution has been linked to the same destiny as that of metaphysics. Kant denies the existence of any intellectual intuition whatsoever, which is why he must overcome agnosticism on an irrational ground. Post-Kantian attempts wish to save metaphysics once more by appealing to an intellectual intuition or to some other substitute that also apprehends the real absolutely. In Kant, it is the postulates of practical reason that allow for the apprehension of the Absolute; in Jacobi it is sentiment; and in Bergson it is a suprarational intuition of the concrete being. These examples could be indefinitely multiplied, from Dilthey, with his *intuitives Erleben und Verstehen*,<sup>46</sup> to Keyserling with his *irrationale und mystische Phantasie*,<sup>47</sup> including Husserl,<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> See as just one example the article by Ottokar Prohászka (bishop of Stuhlweissenburg), "Die Unzulänglichkeit des Intellectualismus in Moral und Religion," *Hochland* 2 (1910): 385ff.

<sup>46</sup> "Intuitive experience and understanding."

<sup>47</sup> "Irrational and mystic fantasy."

<sup>48</sup> With his *unmittelbare Wesensschau* [immediate vision of Being].

Scheler,<sup>49</sup> Volkelt,<sup>50</sup> and so on, not to mention the entire "modernist" religious school of thought. Ultimately, all this is fruit of Cartesian rationalism. If human intelligence is merely reason, it is undeniably not enough to found metaphysics; that is to say, we must appeal to something extrarational on which our knowledge of the Absolute can rest. This appeal is licit and necessary, yet the so-called extrarational something also falls within that which is properly intellectual. This is the great Thomist lesson; it is true intellectualism.

Jacobi's "feeling of the spirit" (*Geistesgefühl*) aims to represent a more immediate and authentic apprehension of the Real than that of laborious and analytical knowledge, fruit of our discursive capacity. His error consists in an extrapolation when he attributes something that belongs to Man's intellective power (in its most noble part, which is the foundation of rational activity itself) to a new faculty that is nonexistent as such.

In fact, if knowledge is the apprehension of one thing "as other," that is, a kind of peculiar, intentional, possession, on top of the apprehension of our sensibility, there will be an intellectual appropriation of reality thanks to the correspondence between the intelligibility of beings and the intelligent nature of our being.

Now then, this penetration of the known in the knower is susceptible of greater or lesser depth; however, there is no other possible cognitive assimilation superior to the sensible one than intellectual appropriation of what is known. Certainly, sentiments, such as sympathy, experience, love, and so on, place us within a particular unification with the object, but this union with something external is not cognitive until it becomes of the intellectual type—and this, by definition. For in all knowledge there must be a union between subject and object which can only be attained thanks to immateriality. And in every suprasensible assimilation, immateriality entails spirituality, that is, intellectual nature. Thus, it is quite obvious that not every piece of knowledge will be rational; but only our intelligence possesses the necessary power of knowledge for "making itself / being, in a certain way, all things," as "the Philosopher" already recognized.<sup>51</sup>

Maximum cognitive perfection then consists in fully exhausting the known thing in intellection, apprehending it in all of its facets and peculiarities. If Being is the object of human understanding, it is comprehensible that the latter cannot be fulfilled in its thirst for knowledge, for perfecting itself to the fullest possible perception of Being. By definition, and by analogy to the sensible order, we call "intuitive knowledge" that which, in one way or another, fully apprehends the concrete reality that lies before it: the complete—totalitarian, if you will—vision of a being.

Furthermore, by examining our cognitive capacity we realize that our usual way of knowing possesses two essential limitations: we do not fully apprehend concrete, individual reality intellectually, nor do we cover, with only one stroke, the generic or specific reality that presents itself before us. That is to say, our common knowledge of things does not exhaust the concrete reality that is presented before it, but rather it imprisons it by inscribing it into various concepts, each one of which comprises many other beings. And additionally, we do not even usually know these specific concepts adequately, in a way that their essential attributes are exhausted as well as all of the properties that are derived from them.

<sup>49</sup> With his *unmittelbares Erleben des Gefühls und der Liebe* [immediate experience of sentiment and love] and *emotionale Auffassung der Werte* [emotional comprehension of values].

<sup>50</sup> With his *überlogisches intuitives Erfassen der Außenwelt* [supralogical, intuitive ability to grasp the outer world].

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* III.8 (431b21).

Now, this thing that our intelligence is not able to do in the majority of cases with regard to concrete reality, it must verify with substitutes of reality in order that it may really know. That is to say, if I do not intellectually see the specific thing that is in front of me, and therefore I cannot exhaust its reality in one single viewing, at least I see the generic or specific essences of things (the universals) and in each step of my discourse, at any rate, I see the next one implicitly. If, on the contrary, this did not happen, I would not be able to move forward in my reasoning. In other words, if there is no (general) intellectual intuition, in the perfect sense, there is at least a certain *intuition of universals* founded on our capacity of abstraction. Call it, if you will, *Wesensschau* (Husserl), *vue directe* (Roland-Gosselin), *intuition abstractive* (Maritain), or *intuition rationnelle* (Jolivet)—ultimately, this is the classic Thomist doctrine.

Similarly, even if we do not see the entire intellectual content of a proposition, at least we can intuit the first of the consequences that, by reasoning, our mind deduces from it. In this sense, intuition is the basis and the origin of knowledge. It may be that there is no complete presence of the known object; but there is certainly intuition of that in which there is presence—and this is the importance of the Thomist abstraction theory that Kant did not understand. All sensible or intellectual knowledge rests on an intuition. The need for reasoning is a defect of our intellect, St. Thomas repeatedly states.<sup>52</sup>

This is why Man sometimes reaches new truths abruptly, skipping over a series of steps that he will later have to patiently complete in order to confirm his intuitive vision. This is the place of invention and of audacious scientific hypothesis later verified by calculation (reasoning) and experience.<sup>53</sup> This is also the case in poetic inspiration in its intellective nucleus. This hasty apprehension, by short-circuit, that skips over the measured, slow, yet safe steps of reasoning, is what we commonly refer to as intuition. Furthermore, the end of all knowledge—and not only its origin—is again another intuition. By means of discourse, of reasoning, starting from a given intuition we reach another, acquired intuition.

In this sense, it is obvious that our reason postulates and demands a superior knowledge to the merely discursive one. Logic itself must rest on some first, that is, intuitive, principles. Precisely because of intuition, logic is linked with ontology, from which it can never become fully independent. Logic needs intuition in order to be triggered, and through intuition, it receives the impression of the Real. There is no thinking without reference to Being.

Are there other types of evidences? Does our being know any part of concrete reality with its own intellectual intuition? According to Jacobi, sentiments are what give us that intuition that understanding does not grant us. Demonstrating a fine instinct for truth, Jacobi later calls *reason* that which he had first called *sentiment*. This intuitive intellection, superior to reasoning, exists but it is of the intellectual order and not of the sentimental one.

If by intuition we understand the direct and concrete vision of a reality, that is, the nondiscursive but intellectual apprehension of an existing thing, then only individual, singular things may be the object of this intuition. Abstraction and rational intuition itself may be about essences that are nonexistent in reality, while intuition strictly speaking must apprehend a real and concrete thing in the order of existence.

But every specific being is not susceptible to this kind of exhaustive assimilation by means of the intellect. Strictly speaking, a full, intentional identity between subject and object is necessary to a complete correlation. But this identity will not be completely fulfilled for our created intellect, except for those beings that are completely intelligible to us, that is,

<sup>52</sup> E.g., "Manifestum est quod defectus quidam intellectus est ratiocinatio" [Clearly, reasoning is a certain defect of the intellect] (*Summa contra Gent.* I.57).

<sup>53</sup> See my "Investigación" in *Rev. de Fil.*, 2.

immaterial. But, on the contrary, from the point of view of the subject, only material beings conform to our intellect. Thus, this intermediate position makes it impossible to Man, on the one hand, to have a perfect intuition, since only a spiritual nature is susceptible to complete intelligibility for a created intellect; and, on the other hand, it tells us that the only possibility is the intuition of a material substance that, precisely for this very reason, cannot be wholly perfect either. But it is not now necessary to descend to a full metaphysics of intellect.<sup>54</sup> What we have already said is enough; there is no need to go into further detail.<sup>55</sup>

Singular, corporeal beings are susceptible to this intellectual intuition, although imperfect and confused. There may be a reflexive, that is, indirect, intuition.<sup>56</sup> But there is still another individual reality that is the object of our intuition, and this is our own selves.<sup>57</sup> The human soul possesses an intuitive knowledge of itself, which is both habitual, though confused and indeterminate, as well as actual, although it is intuited in its actions and not in its bare substance.

This self-perception of the soul—an issue whose development does not belong here<sup>58</sup>—is the foundation of the knowledge, which psychologically could be called affective and even (abusing the word) intuitive, of the soul and of the mental state of the rest of people. But let us not forget that, ultimately, there is knowledge by analogy with our own situation.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, sentiments play a role in this intellectual intuition, insofar as the latter is almost always tinted by sentimental experiences through which many times we reach intuitions that until then had been veiled to us. Sentiments can, from a psychological point of view, become a true source of knowledge, in the sense that their existence, which always accompanies the cognitive act, suggests a second series of cognitive acts, as we have already stated. In this sense, sentiments are valuable auxiliaries to our intelligence. We are well aware of the Bergsonian<sup>60</sup> distinction between feelings (which he calls infra-intellectual) consecutive to an idea, or a represented image, and emotions that generate thought, pregnant with representations, and that he calls supra-intellectual, though more in a temporal than in an ontological sense.

But there is nothing new in this. In one of the greatest and oldest monuments of Philosophy,<sup>61</sup> it is already stated at the beginning that Man naturally *desires* to know; and this desire, this extrarational thirst, is recorded as the psychological trigger of our intellectual faculties. The supernatural *sapida scientia*, the amorous knowledge of the gift of wisdom, has its natural correlate in the harmony between sentiment and intellect in intimate collaboration—though on different planes of equality—for the maximum apprehension of the Real. And there is room here for the entire order of the practical intellect, judgment by inclination

<sup>54</sup> See M. D. Roland Gosselin, "Peut-on parler d'intuition intellectuelle dans la philosophie thomiste?", in *Philosophia Perennis* (Regensburg, 1930), 709ff.

<sup>55</sup> It is very interesting to point out that, despite the different opinions expressed by Roland-Gosselin, who rejects the term *intuition*, and Jolivet, who fully adopts it, they agree more strongly than it seems at first glance, and they even complement each other admirably.

<sup>56</sup> See R. Jolivet's interesting study "L'intuition intellectuelle et le problème de la métaphysique," *Archives de Philosophie* 11, no. 2 (1934): 24ff.

<sup>57</sup> See E. Gilson, *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1932), 2:1–22.

<sup>58</sup> See for example, M. M. Desmarais, "L'auto-perception de la personne psychologique en philosophie," *Études et recherché* (Ottawa: Collège Dominicain, 1936), I:11ff.

<sup>59</sup> This is not the place to descend to the otherwise interesting controversy on the intuition of the soul.

<sup>60</sup> In *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*.

<sup>61</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.1 (980a21).

(that is to say, appetite) connatural to the thing that is judged,<sup>62</sup> the need of a moral preparation to understand certain truths,<sup>63</sup> and so on. And finally, the role of sympathy as a condition of intelligence, and especially the role of love, which makes certain intuitions that are intellectual in their essence seem to be of the affective and appetitive order.

The action of intelligence is more perfect to the extent that it emerges more immediately from the substantial human nucleus in which intellect and will (i.e., love) coincide. So that, with sentiment incorporated in intellection it is possible to later arrive, by "transcending all science,"<sup>64</sup> to the subsumption of sentiment into an amorous knowledge. This is the true *gaudium de veritate*<sup>65</sup> in which the entire Man *veritatem sentiendo videt*.<sup>66</sup>

### *The Positive Limit of Reason*

Ignoring the entire set of questions that are raised by touching upon these problems, there is still one interesting lesson that we can extract from Jacobi's philosophy. With *sentiments* Jacobi aims to fill a void left by reason itself—that is to say, the vital concern of Jacobi's system is to make the leap to sentiment rational. The attempt is not only noble, but it also constitutes one of the fundamental problems of Christian philosophy: to find the positive limit of reason in order to leave room for a suprarational cognitive form, in order to make room for the supernatural mystery.

Jacobi strives to force reason to confess to this insufficiency in which understanding limits itself and therefore leaves the path free for sentiment. But he does not find a positive self-limitation of such a type, one that leaves room for an intelligible, although suprarational, sphere whose existence is recognized as possible by reason itself. This is why Jacobi is satisfied with drawing one positive consequence of his negative limit: contradiction. But he does not search for a merely rational contradiction, as then there would be no room for any other being. The suprarational may exist; there may be a suprarational being. But the contradictory cannot exist; there cannot be a contradictory being. A contradiction is possible, perhaps, between two different ontic orders seen from an inferior plane that is surmountable from a superior sphere; but there is no possibility for the annulment of the principle of noncontradiction. Jacobi aims to overcome the domain of reason, not to destroy it. In this sense, he is in line with Christianity and under Pascal's distinct influence.<sup>67</sup>

For this reason, Jacobi attempts to draw a positive conclusion from the contradiction between the rational order and the order of everyday, ordinary experience of the common sense—of the heart, as Jacobi would say. Reason itself recognizes that there cannot be such enormous chaos: then our intellectual faculty has overstepped its functions and it is necessary to return it to its merely dialectical place, leaving the sphere of vital and concrete reality to the empire of sentiment, as the authentic faculty of the Real. Life, common sense, the cosmological axiom, ultimately, as we will see, are what limits reason's universal pretensions. Yet the attempt to give reason to the irrational through reason itself<sup>68</sup> is nothing but a concession to reason (call it what you will) and one of Jacobi's inconsistencies. In this point

<sup>62</sup> Thomas, *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.2, a.3, ad 2, as well as the text we mentioned earlier: II-II, q.45, a.2.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas, *IV Sent.* d.33, q.3; *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.46, a.2.

<sup>64</sup> Citing St. John of the Cross.

<sup>65</sup> "Joy of truth."

<sup>66</sup> "Sees and senses truth" (St. Gregory the Great, quoted by Thomas, *De Veritate*, q.X, a.11, ad 14). It is a gloss to Gen 32:30.

<sup>67</sup> *Pensées* 267.

<sup>68</sup> *Pensées* 272.

we can also observe the same Kantian atmosphere. Kant's intention was precisely the same: to reduce knowledge in order to make room for faith.<sup>69</sup>

The pretension may be fair, but the method is defective, not just inconsistent. If we do not find a positive self-limitation for reason, and we trip over an extrinsic limitation that is positive in the existential order, instead of descending into irrationality, throwing ourselves into the arms of a blind, subjective, and variable sentimentalism, we must ascend to a suprarationalism that solves the vital problems that reason proves itself incapable of solving. The aporias of reason must find a suprarational and not infrarational solution. Hegel saw this very clearly. If reality is not completely ductile to rational thinking, it is not because there is a seed of irrationality in reality itself, but essentially because of the opposite reason, because it is more reality (*more being*) than our reason itself, because it contains a suprarational structure that we cannot reach with the light of our discourse.

Perhaps this is a problem that reason can only undertake within a Christian environment, that is, in its descending function, once it has already heard of a supernatural sphere apprehended by faith. Then, the entire search for a positive limit to reason adopts a precise and rigorous meaning: to make room for the supernatural. The synthesis of the world, even if it is not rational (rationalizable), must be reasonable.<sup>70</sup>

The positive limit of reason lies in the versatility of the concept of Being—in the *analogia entis*, in other words. Human reason can reach the simplest concept of Being; but when it thinks Being, when it fills it with content in a concrete way, it sees that it can only do this analogically, that is, in relation to complex and different things. We cannot apply the simplicity of this concept univocally to diverse beings. Despite, then, the ontic tendency toward unity (which reason possesses as a creature by virtue of its transcendental relationship to God), it does not reach this unity but imperfectly, as it does not surpass the multiplicity—although analogical—of Being. That which lies above unity, that which culminates in unity, can only be communicated through revelation. It is the sphere of the supernatural—"supernatural" because it is suprarational, and not vice versa. The necessity of this unity over and above reason is nothing short of the demonstration of the existence of God.<sup>71</sup>

Strictly speaking, the principle of noncontradiction and the thesis of analogy of Being complement each other like the negative and the positive sides of our intellectual activity. Between both limits lies our reason. Furthermore, the principle of noncontradiction contains in itself that of analogy, potentially. The principle of identity does not steer away from univocity, and hence the two extreme solutions of idealism (that which *is*, is the creature) and ontologism (that which *is*, is God). The analogy is introduced when affirming that a being can *be* and *not be*, but not at the same time, or under the same relationship. But this topic exceeds the limits of our study.

<sup>69</sup> See the often-quoted text from the Prologue to the second edition of his *Critique*: "Ich musste also das Wissen aufheben, um zum Glauben Platz zu bekommen" [Therefore, I had to remove knowledge in order to make room to faith].

<sup>70</sup> See my "Síntesis," *Arbor* 1 (1944): 21ff.

<sup>71</sup> I must declare my debt, for this entire paragraph, to D. Ramón Roquer.

## CONCLUSION

*Si sapientia Deus est . . . verus philosophus est amator Dei.<sup>1</sup>*

Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* VIII.1

These are, in general terms, the main teachings that can be determined from a global vision of Jacobi's thought. Ultimately, his entire system is tinted with a mystical and religious aspiration that awards it an enormous power of suggestion and that brought him outspoken contradiction during his rationalist century.

Jacobi ends up in mysticism, even though he is not on a supernatural plane that allows him to penetrate into this mysticism. His philosophy represents the free and spontaneous speculation of a thinker who, if without a supernatural Catholic faith, becomes aware of a series of inherent values and truths in the European culture of the eighteenth century, and whose explanation transcends all rational limits. Because his position is sincere and responds to a vital interest, it cannot be separated from the great medieval problem, even if his approach is inverse. If in the Christian centuries faith was what looked for intelligence in the sphere in which intelligence itself opened up (*fides quaerens intellectum*),<sup>2</sup> in Jacobi it is his intelligence that demands faith, without which the complex life of the human being is unintelligible: *intellectus quaerens fidem!*<sup>3</sup>

There is, in fact, a real human situation that, although inaccessible to Man's mere intelligence, positively influences our individual being and the culture of our latitudes: the fact of the supernatural. If we do not bear it in mind, some human circumstances become completely unintelligible, and then we turn to an irrationality that also solves nothing. Many current attempts to make human existence comprehensible clash with this inequality between the facts that they deal with and the means that they have at their disposal to dominate them.

There is a trait that one may say Jacobi possesses, which characterizes thinkers like Augustine, Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, Pascal, Newman, Blondel, and others—to mention only one example from each era—and gives them that peculiar tint that places them, despite their diverse styles, in the same cultural horizon. They never ignore the supernatural dimension, they never abandon the real human situation, they do not, in one word, "do philosophy"; they always aspire to the whole truth, and in their impatience to reach it, they always act with the integral data of our factual existence. They cannot make abstractions of those aspects that they consider precisely to be the most vital and urgent, so as to remain stagnated in the region of clear and distinct concepts. The risk they run is that, if they do not differentiate,

<sup>1</sup> "If God is Wisdom, the true philosopher is he who loves God."

<sup>2</sup> Faith seeking understanding.

<sup>3</sup> Intellect seeking faith.

they will fall into involvements that could be avoided, but their lesson serves as a model for those who have only gone halfway in the investigation of reality.

Yet these are problems for an *integral anthropology*, whose need is again felt in the spiritual horizon of our times.

## Appendix

### CONFIDENCE: ANALYSIS OF A FEELING

*Nolite itaque amittere confidentiam vestram.*

Heb 10:35

#### Introduction

One of the peculiarities of our affective life lies in its radical complexity.<sup>1</sup> Elementary feelings that, like faint traces, cross through the entire weft of our life do not exist in a simple state, but always in a complex cluster that can be more or less compact.

The feeling of confidence is not a simple thread, but an interlacing of elementary feelings, many of which, in turn, are also quite varied. This anarchic diversity of the sentimental elements that compose a real, existing feeling is one of the difficulties of submitting Man's rich affective range to analysis.

Strictly speaking, this complexity is not original. In the same way that we cannot, in truth, affirm that white light is really complex because it can be decomposed under a prism, so the fact that our feelings can be decomposed under the prism of our analytical reason is also not enough to affirm their complexity. Nothing is simpler than a feeling seen under the light of its own feeling. This is of immediate patency, but (sentimental) patency is not as easily communicable as (rational) evidence. And, of course, the detour is even greater if we try to communicate the former not through its particular methods—the loving and sonorous word that is able to "gaze"—but rather by means of the technical sign that neither speaks nor gazes: writing.

Our time of profound anthropological restlessness is incessantly reflecting on the multiple ingredients our complex nature comprises. General theories are often developed that do not fully account for concrete facts. Other theories, instead, analyze diverse aspects of the human being without concern for integrating them into a unitary vision or, at the very least, making them compatible with other dimensions of the human being.

Of all of Man's aspects, the sentimental dimension is perhaps the most threadbare and worn, but it is certainly also the most averse to rational interpretation. The enigmas of our will and intelligence continue to be covered with thorns; though it still seems that, as a whole, Philosophy is more at home among these than among Man's affective or sentimental problems. The following pages do not aspire to "say something" about Man's feelings. It is more modest. Within the sphere of current anthropological interest, we will attempt to analyze a

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<sup>1</sup> This study was originally written two years before I worked out an outline of a theory of feelings, "F. H. Jacobi y la filosofía del sentimiento," *Las Ciencias* 13, no. 1 (1948): 157–223 (Madrid), and published only in *Revista de Filosofía* 22, no. 84–85 (1963): 43–62 (Madrid) with corrections.

specific feeling, leaving its integration into a superior synthesis for another time. Obviously this does not mean that we have ignored the conditions of such integrability.

Furthermore, this issue has been chosen for a threefold reason. A particular kind of existentialism has devoted its interest to these questions and has, in general, highlighted certain of its negative aspects, such as disgust, nausea, hatred, shame, angst, or indifference, leaving aside some eminently positive sentimental vibrations that cannot be ignored if we are to achieve an integral knowledge of human nature.

But this has a second consequence. In the existential analysis of those feelings, we would expect to see a leap to transcendence, as they all entail the intervention of the "other" who determines them. By always putting forth examples that have a negative axiological value, we end up, fatalistically, in a pessimistic, nihilistic—ultimately atheistic—conception of our existence. That is certainly understandable after the experience of a worldly conflagration that is both double and fratricidal.<sup>2</sup>

The third reason is also connected to the current spiritual situation. Understanding the "other," whether he be a political adversary, a man of a different mentality, a people of another race, a Christian of another confession, an individual of another religion, or simply another culture, is a red-hot problem of our times. This does not mean that we are going to tackle any of these issues. We are merely trying to circumscribe the geometric position of the problem, without however descending to the arena of history.

### Phenomenological Description

#### *Initial Approach*

Every Man is like a transmitter of innumerable waves of very different frequencies. Some of these are produced by the intellectual diapason, others emerge from sentimental fibers, from Man's superior or inferior tendencies, and so on. Will and consciousness both miss countless of these radiations that each Man emits. Not only do an enormous range of harmonics and concomitant waves slip through cognitive and voluntary control, but fully independent longitudes of waves are transmitted by our being without the intervention of our consciousness or our will. But if all Men are sources of transmission, they are also receptive centers. This allows for relationships among people.

We are now interested in apprehending only one of these cases and attempting to analyze it. In the simplest of cases, when we speak to another person, we consciously emit specific waves: the main idea that we wish to express. Our interlocutor apprehends these and reacts accordingly. This is how we strike up a conversation, though we are still quite far from confidence.

But along with the main vibration, we simultaneously transmit a multitude of harmonics, of whose existence (with few exceptions) we are, at most, only generically conscious. These are the remains of past thoughts, they are unexpressed nuances, concomitant feelings, implicit premises, assimilated experiences, latent failures and accomplishments; they are, in short, a brief summary, a brief recapitulation of our entire being. Despite his complexity, Man is unquestionably a unity, so that in any one of his manifestations, no matter how small, he necessarily participates as a whole.

Let us not think, however, that we possess a magical key that allows us to know the whole person starting from one simple detail of their lives. This is not possible while our lives are still in process. Nobody can exhaustively understand anybody else while our terrestrial

<sup>2</sup> See some well-known expressions by J.-P. Sartre: "Hell is other people"; "At the bottom of human relationships there is hate"; "Coexistence is a myth, as the essence of society is conflict," etc.

existence has not been extinguished, while we ourselves are not *comprehensors*, according to theological language. In the meantime, possible *comprehension* can only be an imperfect patency of the other within us. Even if it contains a rational element, this power cannot be logical evidence, as it is nowhere written that Man is always consistent, in all the actions of his life. Human communication is like an equation with a number of unknowns—not infinite, but incommensurable—in whose first member lies the entire personality of Man, author and individual responsible for his own actions.

The confidence that one establishes with a friend, which emerges spontaneously among certain persons, which sometimes escapes us almost inadvertently, implies something about this more complete comprehension. But we must descend to greater precision now, since on the side of confidence there are many more highly charged sentimental values that lie along the same path: yearning, friendship, intimacy, trust, comfort, and so on.

If we momentarily abandon the acoustic simile that we have used as a means of introduction, but not the undulatory one, we could compare human person to a transmitter that emits its waves in every direction. Suddenly, the radar registers a reception. Our undulatory train has found a body along its path and it comes back reflected. We have found a friend, or at least someone who may be able to become one; specifically, we have found a confidant.

Here lies the phenomenon we are dealing with: *the sentiment of feeling understood* and, with it, that of *feeling oneself more authentically*. In confidence Man finds himself; perhaps he even discovers himself for the first time. Our eyes also need to be reflected in another person, perhaps even in order to begin to *be in act*. There is no *logos* without *dia-logos* on earth.

Confidence is one of the major sources of peace that exist on earth. One grows weary of so many conventions, of so much pretense, despite the fact that many "good forms" have managed to constitute an almost second nature in some people; but there are times when one feels the need to be oneself openly. And since nobody can see themselves without reflecting in someone else, without giving themselves to somebody else, hence the role of confidence, which, more than a telling oneself, is an expanding oneself; more than a saying oneself, it is an expressing oneself, explaining oneself, unraveling oneself, opening oneself up, not so much by virtue of an act of our will as much as by the power of a special force of attraction that makes us open ourselves up, makes us lose the mask that covers us, makes us speak the truth, not as much to others as to our own selves in face of others.

Man desires to know and yearns to know himself; but because he is positioned in himself and he is vitally invested in his own knowledge, he cannot see himself as he would wish to. It is said that Man knows himself by the reflection in his own self. And we are here speaking precisely of a case of reflection. Even if only intelligence can reflect on *itself*, nothing prevents a feeling, either, from undergoing a phenomenon of reflection (*reflect itself*) in a being that is similar and close (a neighbor). The "good believers" who passed by in front of the man wounded by bandits, in whom the suffering of the injured found no echo, were not his *neighbors*.<sup>3</sup>

And in this reflection of one's own person, a series of human aspects that do not appear in mere rational reflection become known, or better yet, are reenacted, emerge, because the *one-self* on which reason reflects is not the same as that which appears in confidence. Human beings are not only spirit. It would be useless for Man to try to reflect in himself all the emanations that emerge from him in order to have a better knowledge of himself.

There is no reason to insist on Man's lack of self-knowledge. Human beings are enigmas to themselves. They only know themselves through their actions, and these they understand

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<sup>3</sup> See Lk 10:36.

by their respective ends, by the objects they specify. But the concrete goals of their actions are merely crystallizations of a much greater power, the knowledge of which remains in the dark. It is through confidence that Man completes his self-knowledge, insofar as he perceives not only the ends of his actions but also their effects on his fellow Men, once again reflected in his being. But there is still much more. The human person is not an individual, that is, a separated being, "divided" from the rest, with autonomous rights; he is not an autochthonous being who does not need others to exist. The human being is a person, namely, a constitutive and constituting relationship of his actual being.

Confidence is not an external "gift," a welcome yet unneeded aid, nor is it a "complement" that we can use to know ourselves or behave better—any sort of utilitarianism destroys confidence. Rather, through confidence, through that relationship that we have started to describe, a part of my being, a piece of my person, to put it a certain way, is reenacted, it *be-comes*. The "one" of the confidential reflection is more "oneself" than that which is influenced by rational reflection.

I realize that a person understands me because, next to him or her, I understand myself better. I feel that not only the main wave but also the countless conscious and unconscious radiations that emerge from me have been picked up by the other. Furthermore, that person returns them to me reflected, so that I can end up knowing myself, feeling how I am, and thus my being is awakened. There appear, then, before my eyes unsuspected motives for my actions, as if discovered in light of intelligence. There are indeed persons who by themselves are honestly unable to distinguish that which they are from that which they wish to be.

It is undeniable that in this reflection of oneself in another person both personalities intervene. Hence the fragile delicacy of true confidence. As soon as the *you* of my confidence wants, in turn, to become an *I*, as soon as it stops listening or answering, confidence is broken.

We can also destroy it ourselves. One's own person may feel understood, but the discovery of the many layers of our state of mind is not always either agreeable or tolerated. This is why, intuitively, we flee from certain people when there are embarrassing nooks of questionable objectives within our psychic structure. Adam and Eve, after having sinned, hid from God, from the God who had been their confidant.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, a man may tend toward the person who understands him and often times centers him, who acts as a kind of filtering mirror that only reflects those vibrations that are most authentic and absorbs those that are less genuine. Scrupulous souls are precisely those who have lost consciousness of this fundamental distinction between longitudinal primary waves (longed-for or consented) and concomitant vibrations completely devoid of consciousness. This is why the scrupulous person needs a confidant who, as well as reflecting his being, acts as a kind of sedating sieve, absorbing the waves whose frequency does not transcend the limits of responsibility.

With this we turn to the influence of the external person. There are people whose mental structure makes them insensitive to certain outpourings, or that, on the contrary, makes them absorb these but then they do not reflect them. The fact that the mere presence of certain people makes determined attitudes, conversations, and so on impossible is a common experience.

There are persons, on the other hand, who know how to give the amorphous totality of our inclinations and tendencies relief, form, and perspective. Hence also the fact that we instinctively seek out the company of those with whom we are better able to be ourselves. And vice versa, if friendship or confidence develops among two persons for any given reason, they

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<sup>4</sup> See Gen 3:8.

end up acquiring common traits. As the old and well-known adagios say, *Pares cum paribus congregantur, Amicitia aut aequales invenit aut efficit.*<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, if confidence is only possible between sincere persons, only if they are also noble is it stable and long-lasting.

### *Delimitations*

This feeling lies within a scale of feelings whose culminating point is *pure love*. This also explains why a conscious discernment of this type of feelings did not appear until spontaneous love as an individual and collective phenomenon diminished, and the ingredients of its very being emerged out of its ruins.

Confidence is not simple *trust*. It implies trust but is more than that alone. The child trusts his nurse; the servant may trust his master; the worker, his employer—yet in none of these three cases is there confidence properly speaking. Trust is a unilateral relationship; confidence is essentially biunique. This does not indicate, however, that two confidants to a third party must be confidants to each other as well, or even that confidence, in fact, be reciprocal.

Confidence is not identical to *friendship* either. The latter surpasses it in some aspects; but the former is more elevated in the order of comprehension. Two adolescents may be friends, very good friends, without necessarily being confidants. Two old companions, of mature years and having taken different paths, may continue an authentic friendship, without there being confidence between them.

We should also not mistake confidence for *intimacy*, that agreeable breath of physical rapport, like that of a sensitive lover. Two lovers may like being next to each other, find themselves united, yet still remain closed off to confidence. Intimacy requires having the same tastes—at least in that which draws two people together—which provides a common base of contact and understanding. Music is a typical instrument of intimacy. It strikes the same emotional chords and produces that special flow of intimacy. Confidence does not require similarity of tastes, or even of ideals.

Confidence also differs from *sympathy*, even if this is the feeling with which it shares most points of contact. Essentially, they are two reciprocal movements: sympathy leads us to search for a sympathetic being, to attract toward ourselves the person for whom we feel sympathy; confidence, on the other hand, leads us to give ourselves, to open ourselves up to our confidant. In sympathy we are going to receive, in confidence we are going to give. Sympathy is passive (feminine); confidence is active (masculine). The former is reception, the latter, delivery; though, by virtue of the cosmic paradox that governs the processes of the world as a fundamental law, there is also giving in sympathy, even if it is triggered by a search; and in confidence, when we give ourselves we also find ourselves, we are able to surpass our own selves. "Anyone who loves his own life loses it. Anyone who loses it for my sake, will find it."<sup>6</sup> Sympathy attracts; confidence impels. The confidant is one who opens himself up and discovers himself. I give myself because perhaps I have the feeling that in giving myself I find myself, I discover my own self. This is why a confidence ruled to a greater or lesser degree by will is possible, something that makes no sense in sympathy. I may find someone continuously sympathetic but still not be able to establish any kind of confidence with that person.

<sup>5</sup> "People love to stay together with those who are like them"; "Friendship either joins people alike, or makes them so." See Cicero, *Cato Maior / De Senectute* 7; See also Horatius, *Epistulae* 1.5.25.

<sup>6</sup> See Jn 12:25; Lk 14:26, etc.

Confidence is also not the eminently feminine sense of *feeling protected, guided*; it is not the simple trust in the good or wise man who is able to give us sound advice, save us from a difficult situation, or whom we admire because of his personal qualities and in whom we can entrust our wallet, our grief, or our heart. It is not about trusting the other insofar as "other," but rather it is a lot closer to trusting myself as a reflection of the other insofar as "myself." It is not his person that wins over my affections, but rather my own person that awakens. In confidence there is giving, we give ourselves, but strictly speaking, there is receiving, we recover ourselves.

Confidence is not pure spiritual *mutual understanding*. It is not an exclusively intellectual value, nor one of conviction. Two good and observing "religious persons" from the same religious family may be very close, without necessarily having to be confidants. Two intimate collaborators in any enterprise—be it political, military, economic, industrial, social, or even religious—may possess mutual understanding, but they do not necessarily have to be confidants.

Ancient potentates (kings, commanders, queens, princesses) had confidants. Today they have consultants, technical bodies, even men of trust for determined tasks, but not that one person to whom they can show themselves as they think they are and receive themselves as they truly are. It is not lack of trust, but of confidence. And despite the profound transcendent concerns of today's humanity, we are now in an excellent disposition to be able to accept this feeling.

Needless to say, if nothing in life truly allows us to create watertight compartments, this is much more so in the world of feelings, which can in no way be divided into rigid categories. The entire sentimental range of feelings we have mentioned cannot be mistaken with the feeling at hand, but they cannot be completely separated from it either, since together they form a unique whole, and that which does not seem to be premise may emerge as a fruit or consequence.

#### *Premises*

Our intention is not to analyze every premise of confidence, but to briefly see some of the positive attitudes that open us up to it.

In order for confidence to emerge, many words are not necessary, nor is it necessary to taint our shame in opening ourselves up or even to artificially defeat the apathy that so often invades us before exposing our own views. When facing our confidant, one gaze, one gesture, one word, one fact, or one reaction is enough to know what it is about, to feel understood and centered.

Confidence is not a cool evaluation of the effects of my personality on others, as it is also not a mere *knowing oneself* to be understood, but rather a full *feeling oneself* to be understood. The very last fibers of our feelings are what come into play here, because it is about a penetration that is not felt as foreign and about a self-illumination of the ultimate redoubts of our person. One has the sense of feeling oneself discovered, opened, a bit in the open air. This is why some persons shy away from confidence, and for this same reason it is very healthy. Man acts toward an end. These ends are not so numerous in the abstract: God, power, pleasure, honor, love, and so on—but nevertheless they possess tonalities and combinations that are original and differentiated in each human being. Because of confidence, one comes gradually to notice the different elemental waves that constitute the resulting vibration due to more or less harmonic interferences. And thus one comes to start to feel the intimate layers of our own being, in the same way that in a good massage after physical strain one feels each one of the fibers of our aching muscles.

It is obvious, on the other hand, that there is a necessary preparation for confidence. Just as there is an art of being alone and knowing how to isolate oneself properly, there is also an art of knowing how to look for company, in short, the art of finding oneself. Our densely populated cities are like those deserts populated by small tribes in isolated oases, with the only difference that here distances have been reduced to zero; people have ceased to be isolated, yet they continue to be solitary. There is no *fides*, which is the base of *confidence*.

Peaceful dialogue, spontaneous expression, sincere feelings, all these develop gradually in our dealings with the other persons *qua* persons. In our current civilization there are continuous dealings among people, but not as persons, as brothers, as neighbors (in the evangelical sense), but rather as *others*, as bureaucrats of a state or as employees in some company, or as simple and anonymous travelers in a subway or a cable car, or as citizens, or next-door neighbors in the best scenario. Other times we confront our "dear colleague" whom, essentially, we envy, or we simply compete against, or whom we wish we had surpassed.

"It is not right for man to be alone," says Genesis 2:18. Man's companion is woman; but this inspired affirmation is more extended, and woman's vital company neither eliminates nor crosses out the spiritual need of a person able to receive our confidences—and vice versa, of course.

There are times when it is not enough to transmit feelings, desires, or ideas to the empty sidereal world, or to some brilliant brains that assimilate them, or to some disciples who value them. There is a need for a human echo that discovers these, a confidant with whom to dialogue—with whom one can often complete the incipient and embryonic dialogue that will perhaps end up with an opinion that is contrary to what it was at the beginning.

A confidant is someone who understands me as an equal, and of whose comprehension and embrace I am aware—someone who understands me without my having to give myself to be known. This is why confidence needs a relationship, coexistence, as well as explanation and expansion. But it must be in a plane of equality. My confidant's comprehension must not inhibit me; it must not be some high and elevated model that sermons me and constantly reminds me of my duties. A confidant is not a tutor or a master. The man who is always without mirth is burdensome to others, says Thomas Aquinas.<sup>7</sup> We need someone with whom we can be ourselves, and even more profoundly ourselves than when we are alone.

That this *confidence* needs faith is something we have already stated; now we have to add that this faith in our neighbor presupposes faith in God, just like love for our neighbor is subsidiary to love for our Creator.

But this is not the place to study every single premise of this feeling. There is, however, one single premise that we cannot fail to mention if we are to avoid disfiguring this feeling. We are referring to love. Without love on both sides there is no possible confidence, and the first premise that opens us up to confidence is this stepping outside our own selves that true love brings with it, and this forgetting of one's self that not only makes us be more ourselves but also allows us to form part of the other, participating in a superior communion that makes us be precisely that which we truly are.

In order to remain within phenomenological limits, we must add one consideration about the gaze that takes place in confidence and that prepares it. It is a gaze that does not *see*. It looks, and through it, that special vibration in unison between two human beings is established, like those diapasons that unexpectedly start vibrating because a connatural though unperceivable harmonic note has sounded right next to them. There has been no more preparation than our very own nature, open to the notes that may come from the

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<sup>7</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.168, a.4.

surrounding world. It is a gaze that *looks* and in which we look at ourselves without fear or fright, because it is a gaze that does not *see*, that does not judge us, either in the good or in the bad, that does not aspire to do us service according to its own peculiar concepts; that does not want to remove the wisp of straw from our eyes,<sup>8</sup> that does not scrutinize us by looking at us like objects, turning us into things, even if these are valued and admired things, as they are things nonetheless.

It is not the gaze that embarrasses, that depresses, but neither is it the gaze that sees us as we are or as we would like to be, or perhaps as we should be. It is a gaze that does not see, but in which we see ourselves, in a vision that not only helps us understand ourselves but also makes us feel that we are, and, strictly speaking, it collaborates in our being. It is not as much the gaze of the risen Christ who "and merely regarding them as He passed clothed them with His Beauty,"<sup>9</sup> as the gaze of the Son of Man who looks at Peter without saying anything,<sup>10</sup> without reprimanding him, without ever reminding him (even later) of anything. But Peter understood, or better yet, understood himself, and even later he did not answer the Master's question except with the lesson he had learned: "Lord, you know that I love you."<sup>11</sup>

Jesus, says Thomas à Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ*, is the best friend, the best and indefectible confidant. Only the "God made Man" can be the confidant of all Men. Moses, the great prophet, was God's confidant; the people wanted Moses to be the one to speak to God,<sup>12</sup> even if ultimately they had more trust in Aaron and Joshua than in their first prophet. We also need pure human confidence, even when our faith introduces us into the confidence of the Son of Man. "It is not good for man to be alone."

Perhaps this is the meaning of the Paulist text:<sup>13</sup> Do not allow your confidence to get lost, do not wish it gone. Or better yet, following the Greek text: do not lose your frankness now, since the reward is so great.

Strictly speaking, *παρρησία* means to speak freely<sup>14</sup>—the ability to say everything, the full expression of the *λόγος*, if you wish, in the sense mentioned above. It is that turning toward the exterior. But this complete extraversion can only be carried out when the exterior has been placed on the same plane as the interior, when these have been identified. This is one of the premises of confidence.

### *Obstacles*

The two general types of obstacles are those related to the *subject* and those related to those who *receive* confidence. Furthermore, each of these general types has three subtypes. We discuss all of these below.

The first obstacle on the part of the *subject* is an attitude of *self-sufficiency* or shutting oneself up. He who proudly believes that he is able to manage by himself and does not allow anyone to penetrate into his abode, who never opens the door to the guest who knocks, who narcissistically or desperately shuts himself up in his solitude, refuting all communication,

<sup>8</sup> Mt 7:4.

<sup>9</sup> From St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 5.

<sup>10</sup> Lk 22:61.

<sup>11</sup> Jn 21:15–17.

<sup>12</sup> Ex 20:19–21.

<sup>13</sup> Heb 10:35; Μη αποβαλητε ουν την παρρησιαν υμων.

<sup>14</sup> From παν and ρησις.

that is, excommunicating himself from the human community—this individual is obviously incapable of feeling what confidence is.

The second obstacle, related to the first, is the *insincerity* of those who never want to take off the mask of superficial relationships, who do not want to "make their lives more difficult," who perhaps fear facing up to reality with others and, of course, with themselves. This is not only about conscious insincerity, which can coherently be called immoral on a plane of the morality of actions; this is about a deeper insincerity, one that makes Man not want to conform to his own being and makes him prefer, more or less consciously, to deform it, to hide it even from his own eyes, not only to not appear to be what he is, but even to not *be* this way, to change his own structure. This refers to those who would like to "convert," but self-redemption is not possible. He who does not open up even to himself cannot possibly establish a relationship of confidence with someone else. And if, for any other reason, someone like this was able to establish a relationship of this kind, it would most likely generate hatred in him for having seen himself surprised, bare, and uncovered, in that which he would prefer to forget and that, in any case, he has already managed to not recognize as his own.

The third obstacle is that of *ambition*. In the second obstacle we saw the wish to conceal what one truly is; here, it is more about the desire to hold back on what one wants to be, or sometimes it is about simply wanting to be what one is not called on to be. Consequently, such persons cannot stand to see themselves discovered in confidence. However, ambition does not necessarily have to be bad; it is enough that it be unacknowledged.

There is another type of ambition that constitutes an obstacle for confidence, and that is when it is looked for excessively. Any sort of utilitarian attitude is, at the very least, an injury for confidence. If I strive for confidence in order to enjoy myself or to better know myself and thus better exploit my possibilities; if I tend to confidence for some sort of inner or intellectual voluptuousness; if, in one word, I seek confidence because of its results instead of as a natural and normal expansion of my being and my way of being, then the very emission of my rays—following our first metaphor—is no longer pure and will not be reflected as it should be.

Everything we have stated up to now cannot be understood *more geometrico*. All of these and analogous obstacles can, in turn, be corrected by confidence itself when it is able to establish itself despite these obstacles we have mentioned.

Now we discuss the three types of obstacles related to those who *receive* confidence. The first is he who *knows not how to listen* because he is full of himself, or because he lacks the minimum mental purity or is incapable of unchaining any kind of relationship of confidence with his fellow man. The so-called spiritualist, the lack of interest in others or in the things of this earth, the excessive preoccupation for oneself, and in general, any saturated posture is unable to offer an adequate receptacle for confidence.

Second, whoever adopts a *utilitarian* posture such as we have described is also incapable of confidence. Whoever wishes to judge, even if it is to help the other, whoever considers himself to be in a superior position, whoever is not patient and active at once, whoever does not know how to discover himself, or better yet, whoever does not discover himself in the process of confidence—without necessarily performing it himself as well—cannot be a confidant. True confidence does not inspire either mercy (for my neighbor's miseries) or envy (for its positive values).

The third obstacle is that of the person who, not wanting to judge, nevertheless *believes himself to be in a situation to comprehend*, to categorize, to store experiences, to compare other cases or persons—someone who has excessive confidence in himself and in his "techniques" to be a confidant. The spontaneity that is needed for any confidence,

the unrepeatability, the uniqueness, of all vital processes cannot have room in whoever turns confidence into a technique or even into a science. Confidence is never finished. It pacifies the soul, but it never saturates it; it gives the soul contentment but not saturation, and ultimately it always leaves an aftertaste of provisionality, which is what allows us to renew and continue it, and which gives it that certain trait of suffering and imperfection that defines it. Confidence is always imperfect and it always leaves one wanting more. Furthermore, the feeling of being understood is never total or perfect because everything on this earth is itinerant.

### Anthropological Explanation

A theory of feelings would have to offer us the possibility of transcending phenomenological description. We believe that the outline we have developed elsewhere<sup>15</sup> allows, at the very least, a certain explanation of this feeling that now concerns us.

In every feeling there is certain recognition of an appetite that is one's own. The original nucleus of the feeling is the consciousness of an inclination of our very being in a unified action, to a greater or lesser degree.

In this case, the human tendency that makes itself clear in the feeling of confidence is not a determined appetite, but rather a fundamental direction of the same, which, whether it is filled by one content or another, will give way to the different forms that confidence may take. Hence the peculiarity of this feeling.

Man knows he is heading for the infinite, and he is frightened by the countless possibilities that lay in front of him. Many appetites are not conscious until they return to the transmitter reflected by some other person—hence that peculiar feeling that originates when Man finds a testimony of his very being, an existential handle in the very flow of his own dynamism.

Man possesses certain tendencies and inclinations, triggered by all kinds of goodness, from Supreme Goodness to the lowest and poorest goodness of the last of his appetites. However, there is a twofold knowledge of this complex dimension of the tendencies of human life: rational abstract knowledge and concrete knowledge by connaturality with one's own appetites in particular. In the latter case we begin to realize the functioning of our own being. But in this movement there is no possibility of a more concrete, delimited conceptual knowledge. Man "knows," he feels his different tendencies, he perceives the diverse *temptations* to which his complex being is subject, *originally* wounded in his unity, but he does not actually finish specifying them until he receives them reflected by a similar being. This is not about knowledge of our neighbor by analogy, but rather the exact opposite: it is about self-knowledge through the reflection we receive from another human being with whom we establish this vital relationship.

It is then that the feeling of confidence properly speaking emerges, whose ultimate redoubt is once again our own selves after having deposited faith, "confidence" in our neighbor. Man then completes his own self-knowledge after having taken out of latency his own dynamism, the goals of his diverse inclinations that he himself does not quite dominate intellectually. The peace of those who have defeated the angst of a bottomless inclination, the burden of a vague tendency that has no end in sight, emerges, then, in the souls of those who possess goodwill.

Needless to say, this is not rational knowledge but rather a peculiar sentimental consciousness, that is, a kind of auscultation of the very direction of our being, a consciousness of our tendencies that we perhaps knew externally by rational reflection and that now, in turn, we

<sup>15</sup> See my study on Jacobi mentioned above.

verify and deepen, feeling their palpitation within ourselves. A few examples may help us illustrate what we intend to express.

I may know myself to be, for example, vain in determined environments out of the desire to be liked or to want to be considered "something" (good, wise, elegant, rich, amusing, clever, etc.). When I discover myself to be vain in confidence, the prior theoretical discovery is complemented by a feeling of my own vanity, having discovered my own tendency for self-affirmation, knowing the movement of my vanity not by reflection but rather by its sentimental presence, which we have here called *patency*, the same tendency of my being to want to stand out, to affirm myself, to conquer an affection, an admiration, a power, or whatever. Confidence will have awakened in me an experimental knowledge, if you will, because it will have made me "feel" my own vain tendency and inclination.

We now have a case that is somewhat less peripheral to our aim: I feel indecisive in facing an important decision I must make (choosing one profession or another, between this or that vocation, activity, etc.). Nobody better than me to have all the elements at hand, especially when I have consulted competent persons who have been able to illuminate me on the facts and consequences of such a decision (the advice of a father, a spiritual director, an expert, a friend, etc., do not belong to confidence *per se*: all of them have answered my questions and they have conveyed their opinions to me, but they have not triggered the defining feeling of confidence that we are studying here), and despite knowing all this, I know not what *to do*. I cannot "see."

What is it that I cannot see? I know the problem, I am familiar with the data, the radical insecurity and inherent limitation to every decision are known to me, and nevertheless, I "cannot see myself" in this decision—that is, I have not yet discovered my own self's tendency to see if it runs for or against such a decision. I have not yet felt the direction of my intimate dynamism, which is the only thing that can generate the knowledge that the decision I choose is the one that most "befits" me, the one that "suits" me best. Confidence is what provides me with this feeling. One fine day, a gaze, an event, a conversation, an experience, a vital contact with external reality, a word, and, in general, a meeting with my confidant makes me "see" clearly and it puts me in the position of being able to decide, precisely then more voluntarily than ever, because I myself have discovered the hidden affinity, the secret relationship, the internal harmony between my being and that particular decision. I have comprehended myself because something or someone has reflected that which I myself am, which has triggered in me the feeling that reveals the dynamism of my own tendencies and inclinations in that determined field.

One reaches self-comprehension through the feeling of being understood. The understanding afforded by another makes the specific feeling I was looking for echo within myself. This comprehension by the other is not, strictly speaking, a conscious comprehension and a reflection of the other as such; rather it is more my own feeling that the other has comprehended me and, in this way, I can then feel my own comprehension.

### Metaphysical Foundation

An anthropological explanation is not enough if it is not founded on a metaphysical one. We will say something about this quite schematically.

#### *The Communion of Beings*

Everything we have stated above may be true because the created world is a unity and because the relationship between different beings that form this universe is not a

relationship between monadic unities but rather one between beings that are constitutively connected to each other. This communion acquires a special, intense characteristic when it is about the personal being, whose very essence consists in a relationship. All the rediscovery of the Church and of the communal dimension of faith, life, and so on, moves along these lines.

### *The Leap to Transcendence*

A merely phenomenological analysis of this feeling, like that of other similar feelings, leads us to rediscover a structure of Man that became problematic during the emergence of critical Philosophy. This feeling, in fact, reveals to us that Man is fully Man only when, following the ultimate dynamism of his very tendencies, he discovers transcendence. Confidence represents a leap toward the transcendent existential, toward the other, toward our neighbor and the discovery of our neighbor, not as a punishment or a condemnation that must be endured, but rather as a liberation to be enjoyed. Only when the other becomes our neighbor do we discover the intimate and constitutive links of human cohabitation and coexistence.

In the feeling of confidence there is something more than a mere knowledge of an appetite of ours; there is, in fact, a certain leap into transcendence. In confidence there is something more that comes to us from outside and that we feel as such. Because of confidence I open myself up to the *other* and at the same time I receive a good part of this *other*, even if it is through receiving myself reflected in him. That this *other* may not be anyone, but rather that he must be my *neighbor* is something we have already stated. It is, thus, a feeling that places us in the world, among our neighbors and leads us through paths of trust and love, making us overcome the typical relationships of hatred, flight, fear, shame, and so on.

This does not mean that the feeling of confidence does not consist of the knowledge of an appetite. In the first place, not all knowledge is immanent. We relate to the exterior with our mind, and the latter functions thanks to its dimension of impressionability, which does not eliminate its second moment of spontaneity.

But in the second—and most important—place, it is our appetite that leads us to transcend ourselves. Man tends to his own perfection, he aspires to possess himself, he leans on others insofar as these *others* are able to give him accounts of *himself*—or of *God*—as his deepest core. Because of his appetites, Man transcends himself, or better yet, he aims to transcend himself. When this tension to possess himself, to complete himself, crystallizes in the trusting offering of his intimacy to a fellow man who understands him, and this tendency becomes conscious, then the feeling of confidence emerges.

### *The Tripersonal Structure of Human Existence*

Our analysis of confidence has led us to conjecture something for whose justification much more than a mere phenomenological analysis would be needed: the tripersonal structure of our existence. This is not the place to ground this affirmation. We limit ourselves to a simple description of the elements of the problem that relate to our topic.

It is a psychological fact that the awakening of consciousness in the child does not adopt the form of an "I" at the beginning, nor much less one of a "you," but rather the equally personal form of a "he." The child speaks and, even more, feels everyone, including himself, as a "he"; and, in fact, he refers as much to things, to others and to himself as if he were on the outside, as if he were a third reality facing his interlocutor. This original "he" is later differentiated into the "it" of things, the "you" of others, and his own "I." This psychogenetic process represents

something more than a simple psychological evolution; it represents a metaphysical reality that offers the real foundation to the awakening of the child's consciousness.

Man cannot discover his "I" without the immediate contrast to a "you." The reason for this does not lie in an impossibility of fact or in a simple psychological law, but rather in a metaphysical reality, as, in fact, there is no *I* without a *you* and vice versa. Furthermore, the *you-I* relationship is only possible within the sphere of a *he*. In the same way that there can be no *I* without a *you*, there can neither be an *I-you* without a *he* that delimits and distinguishes them. This is so important because it is the key to overcoming pantheism. Without a *he*, the *I-you* relationship melts into a monolithic monism that ends up destroying the relationship itself. When mysticism is not Trinitarian, it falls into monism. Dualism is not stable. The relationship of love between the creature and God that the mystic experiments dissolves into pure identity as soon as the third factor, which makes identity within diversity possible, is no longer recognized. *Sed de hoc satis.*

If, from a phenomenological point of view, confidence reveals to us a great part of this intimate structure of Man, from a metaphysical point of view, this structure explains to us the possibility of confidence and its reason for being. In fact, Man understands himself and feels himself when he opens up to his fellow man because one only *is* in relation to others. The process of confidence, ultimately, is not so much an extrinsic enrichment as it is an intrinsic actualization verified by the mutual fructification of two parts, here persons, of a whole.

The evangelical precept to love your neighbor as you love yourself is not so much a precept—one cannot be commanded to love—as the expression of a dynamic and real tautology in opposition to static and unreal appearance. I must not love my neighbor *as* I love myself because this is what is required of me, thus interpreting "as" in the style of "als ob," of "as if." That is, I must not love my neighbor by recurring to a pious fiction "as if" he were myself, but rather I must love him *like* myself because, in truth, he is *my-self*. This is equivalent to saying that the evangelical precept reveals reality to us: "Love your neighbor as what he truly is, a part of yourself; expand your little and selfish *ego* and realize that in your real *your-self*, your neighbor is included, and that you must love him as what he is, that is, *your-self*, *your-I* [tu-yo in Spanish]."

This love is never perfect on earth because we are not yet ourselves here, in this world. Because I am not completely myself, I cannot consequently love my neighbor *as* myself. On the other hand, this love of my neighbor *as* myself expands the limits of my *ego* and broadens my-self insofar as it embraces my neighbor more intensely and extensively.

This leads us to the last section of our study.

### Theological Epilogue

The evangelical precept alluded to above not only requires us to love our neighbor *as* ourselves but also invites us to love God with our entire being.<sup>16</sup>

Here we could insert an analogous consideration to the one just made. The inspired text does not tell us that God is our neighbor—the *you*—but rather: "Listen Israel! . . . You must love the Lord, *your God* . . ."<sup>17</sup> The great error of current religious phenomenology (despite the enormous benefits that it has brought us) has consisted in believing that God is the "Other," and that if He were, He would stop being God, and He would surely stop being *my God* or, as in the sentence of the Scriptures, "*your*" God. God is not the "Other"

<sup>16</sup> See Mt 22:37–39.

<sup>17</sup> Dt 6:4–5.

but rather the "One" and so fully "one" that he is the "Tri-one," the plenitude of the One and Unity. God has not created the world outside of Himself, nor is creation foreign to Him. "Another" next to God, "another thing" that is not God next to God does not exist nor can exist. God has no second, no parallel, nor anything that can be called "other," as we even lack the paradigm of comparison that would allow us to distinguish Him. Neither His immensity, nor His perfection, nor His simplicity, nor any of His attributes allow us to place any other "other" next to Him. God is certainly "my" God, and I must love Him.

But if we place ourselves in the correct perspective of things, which is not the anthropocentric vision of reality but rather the theocentric one, we see that the reason that God is "my" God is that I am "His" creature. I am, in fact, God's "you," and as such, as soon as God calls me "you," by my name, He gives me my existence. Confidence is participation in this ultimate reality. In it, I discover myself as what I am, an *I* who becomes as it becomes somebody's *you*.

This also explains the radical imperfection of all human confidence. The interpretation is never perfect because, strictly speaking, even if our neighbor helps us conquer our own being, he is not the one who gives it to us. The perfect confidant, the confidence that is paradigmatic of all the rest, here on earth, is our confidence with Christ. In it, we are given with provisional plenitude what other confidences cannot give. Faith is required, as in any confidence, but it is no longer just any faith; it must be the living and real faith that is already in itself an answer to His call and an invitation to confidence. Love is necessary, as in any other confidence, but it is no longer just any kind of sympathy; rather it is the participation of the very Love with which the Father makes divine confidence with the Son, finding themselves in the Holy Spirit.

However, the exact character of Christian confidence—we are referring to confidence with Christ—is not an obstacle for this confidence to not possess all the characteristics of human confidence. It is, indeed, the human confidence par excellence. It is precisely what shows us that our relationships with God do not belong to the disembodied realm of pure spirit, but rather that they possess a peculiar theandric reality that unifies in themselves all human values on earth and connects them in supernatural unity with He in whom all things are Life.<sup>18</sup>

Confidence with Christ is the path to our configuration with Him and the means for the complete formation of our person. It also implies the discovery of the Lord as confidant—that is, it implies a personal relationship to Christ, with all that this entails. The transcendence to which this confidence opens us up is not only the external world but rather the new earth and the new heaven. We are insofar as we are Christ, the *You* of the Father. And we are Christ by virtue and grace of *Him*, the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>18</sup> See Jn 1:3–4.



## SECTION II

### FREEDOM AND CONSCIENCE\*

My conscience told me I had better not talk about freedom yet because it is a theme that I have put in parentheses for several years to think about more thoroughly later. . . . But my conscience also told me I should not hesitate to express myself here in this journal.

I was and am free. I decided to speak. But what happened? What about my conscience? What does my conscience say about that?

There is something more here than a psychological conflict. It is very important to obtain an ontological foundation. We want to stay only at the ontological level. And only here can one resolve the discrepancy with which our culture is confronted. It is often said these days that biblical thinking is completely different from philosophical and theological thinking. One can arrive at a synthesis only through working out an ontologically Christ-centered apprehension of reality. In other words: only a Christ-centered consciousness of contingent being as such will open genuine Christian thinking to us, through which we can then reach an original Christian answer to all of life's problems.

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## I

## FREEDOM

There are two possible—and complementary—ways for a Christian to approach an issue: from below and from above.

*Via Ascensionis*

We call the first way *via ascensionis*, the ascending way. This is the gradual, philosophical way: with an awareness of our actions, we ascend the structure of Being by means of our reason. Let us sketch out the steps of a genuine philosophy for reaching the concept of freedom:

1. My action does not appear determined *ad unum* (i.e., uniquely), nor definitely and clearly predetermined. I can act one way or another. I sense and experience the possibility of manifold actions in myself: sitting, standing, walking, speaking, remaining silent, and more.

2. If I analyze these possible actions, I see that each possibility has a reason. I do not have arbitrarily many possibilities, but—following the principle of sufficient reason—only as many as there are objective reasons. There must be a *ratio* (i.e., reason) there. I can sit or stand, depending on how tired or lazy I am; I can speak or remain silent, depending on whether I have something to say or want to say, or rather not. I do not have, right here and now, the possibility of speaking Finnish or soaring about in the air, for example.

3. The possibility that is actualized is the *freest* one if it is in accordance with the deepest core of my being; if the *ratio* for my action is determined not from outside but *from inside*. The action will be freer, the deeper its origin is in me.

If I sit down only because of too much lactic acid in my muscles (physical fatigue), I am less free than if I stand because I want to write standing. If I write from love of truth or from consciousness of responsibility, I am far freer than if I keep silent simply for fear of people or for comfort.

That action coming forth from the depth of my being, really coming from me and out of me, is therefore free.

4. Only that action is thus free that I can call *my* action, that action really belonging to *me*, the action that I can insist on the right to and ownership of because it wells up from within me and not from some foreign influence.

That means: only a being that possesses itself, that can possess itself, can be free. In other words: the free being must exist in such a way as to be master over itself. It must be able to determine itself because it can create distance between its being and its action. Here *Geist*<sup>1</sup> is

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<sup>1</sup> *Translator's Note:* A German word basically meaning "spirit," but entailing very many concepts.

needed. Only the spiritual being can be free because only the spirit can possess itself, reflect on itself, and be master of its own actions.

5. If we investigate the nature of spirit, we find knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) and will as its constituent parts, which should be neither confused nor mixed nor treated separately from each other. Spirit means a being that can have itself at its own disposal and is not merely a passive *thing*, but is *I, a person*, for it can be itself with its own consistency by means of those two parts—faculties—of the “being impressed by” and “being able to impress.” All of metaphysics is included in this.

With this comes the saying that freedom presupposes both knowing (*Erkenntnis*) the truth and striving for goodness, but freedom is not an issue of merely will or reason but rather of the spirit, that is, of the whole person.

Most antinomies between freedom and knowledge, between freedom and will, arise from the fact that one is not taking into consideration the integral, central characteristics of freedom. Thomas Aquinas wrote, “Radix libertatis est voluntas sicut subjectum: sed sicut causa est ratio” (The root of liberty is the will as the subject thereof; but it is the reason as its cause [*Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.17, a.1, ad2]).

6. We come to the highest peak of the philosophical path. Freedom is the basic characteristic of spirit, an exponent of its value and its unbreakable unity. The spirit is free when it remains *true to itself*, when it decides for what is in accordance with its essence, namely, the true and the good, for the true and the good—also *per se* as the expression of divinity—are in accordance with the essence of the spirit.

7. How does it come about, however, that as the result of this freedom, persons can depart from the true and the good? How does it come about that humans can misuse their freedom and subsequently *sin*?

It is clear that freedom does not consist of spirit being able to negate itself, but this possibility is included. “Et pro tanto dicitur, quod velle malum nec est libertas, nec pars libertatis, quamvis sit quoddam libertatis signum” (For this reason it is said that to will evil is not freedom or any part of it, though it is a sign of freedom [Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q.22, a.6]).

But here in our existential encounter with the *mysterium iniquitatis* (mystery of iniquity, mystery of evil), we plummet from our pinnacle down and have to start our whole system anew. But beforehand, we may take into consideration newer construction materials—from divine revelation and through faith.

#### *Via Descensionis*

Revelation opens a newer sphere of existence and deeper layers of already recognized realms of existence to a believer. By these otherwise inaccessible insights (*Erkenntnissen*), all of reality is comprehended anew. It is the way from above, the *via descensionis* (way of descent), the theological way.

More than the English terms “spirit, spiritual,” in fact, it implies intellect, reason, self-consciousness, and the whole mysterious core of self-individuality, as it can be seen in the explanations given by Panikkar immediately afterward. Anyway, the translation “spirit” has been chosen because it is more consistent with the Panikkarian theme of freedom.

From above, we intend to set forth the following observations:

1. *God is free.* Freedom is a characteristic of divine Being: for God—considered negatively—would otherwise be bound and determined through something standing before or above Him, whereby He would then stop being God. And this is because—seen positively—freedom is a perfection that must somehow have its analogy in God.

2. *In what does this freedom consist?* Divine freedom does not consist in unbounded possibility, as might appear from a mere “ascending” reflection, as if God were also free because all possibilities are open to Him. That is pure anthropomorphism. Possibility simply does not apply to God. That is not a divine category. God is the fullness of Being, and there can be no possibility in Him, neither before His intellect nor before His will. His knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) does not work like ours. There is no dialectical law above the divine Spirit that would, like necessity (*mōira*), determine His knowledge. He is the absolute source of the stream of thought. There is also for Him no freedom of choice among possibilities in our sense. Nothing can exist before Him. And indeed, He even lacks a possibility that we possess: He cannot do any evil, or better said, this *can* or *cannot* makes no sense in His case: “Sicut non posse peccare non diminuit libertatem ita etiam necessitas firmatae voluntatis in bonum non diminuit libertatem” (Just as inability to sin does not diminish freedom, so necessity to firmly will the good does not diminish freedom [Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, II-II, q.88, a.4, ad1]).

Freedom grows along with the “acknowledgment” of necessity. Absolute freedom is absolute necessity. Divine freedom is His Being itself. It is the expression of His will and His intellect.

3. The issue is therefore *freedom of being*. God is free because He is Spirit, because He is absolute thought and will. God is free because He does what He wants, and He wants what He is; this means: because He is what He is and does what He does from Himself, from His Being. Ultimately and in the last instance—we make a leap here—God is free because He acts and is “[out] of love,” [out] of pure, ontological, and thus intrinsically divine love. God is love. Freedom’s fundamental category is therefore neither independence nor possibility, but love. Through love, I can transform a forced situation into a free one, and indeed because I accomplish what I do through love from my innermost being. True, authentic love is always free! Who could imagine an unfree, forced love? “Quicumque autem ex amore aliquid facit, quasi ex scipso operatur: quia ex propria inclinatione moverunt ad operandum. Et ideo contra rationem servilitatis est quod aliquis ex amore operetur” (Whoever acts out of love acts out of himself because he is moved by his own inclination. Consequently to act out of love is against the very concept of servility [Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, II-II, q.19, a.4]).

The divine Being is free as such because it<sup>2</sup> “is.”

4. As for *freedom of action*, we should distinguish between an inner-divine activity (realm of free necessity) and an extradivine act (realm of necessary freedom). “The truth of God is identity between necessity and freedom: God is free insofar as He is necessitated, and necessitated insofar as He is free” (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Wahrheit* [Zürich: Einsiedeln, 1947], 273).

5. From that can the *being of freedom* thus be gained: freedom is the mark, the dimension of Being that indicates lordship, mastery of oneself. Every being that affirms its being is

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<sup>2</sup> “Es” in German, referring to *Sein* (Being).

free, and is free insofar as it affirms this. Every action in accordance with the actor's actual core of being is free.

Insofar as we consider activity, freedom resides in the will and thus depends on love. I am free to the extent that I love my boundedness.

6. The *secret of freedom* lies in its "boundedness." If divine freedom is absolute, for God is Being as such, our freedom is bound, for we are bound beings. The contingent being is a constitutively bound being. This boundedness is the ground of our being and consequently the ground of our freedom. To wish to rend this boundedness would be the negation of freedom. Even though such rending is ontologically impossible, it is certainly possible psychologically and anthropologically. It is the abuse of freedom. A person wants thereby to rend the boundedness and falls into a "bondage" that enslaves. From our condition here below, I become freer, the looser I hold to the bonds that bind me like chains and the tighter I uphold the boundedness that constitutes me—in relationship to God and the entire creation.

## CONSCIENCE

The Latin word *conscientia* entails on the one hand the meaning "consciousness" (where again self-consciousness should be distinguished from mere consciousness) and on the other hand "conscience," which one could denote as moral self-consciousness.

1. Every definition demands first a *distinction* from other subjects and then a demarcation of the distinguished issue in itself.

Scholastic terminology clearly distinguishes "conscience" as the judgment of practical reason based on moral principles concerning the morality of a concrete action from *synderesis* as a predisposition of the conscience, as preparedness and potential for the knowledge of moral principles. Accordingly, conscience would be an "action" and not a *habitus*.

If conscience, however, is an action, it is also an expression for the ontological constitution of human existence that enables precisely that action.

2. The *analysis* of the issues treated here must assume that conscience is what, in the last instance, says whether we may carry out a deed or not. It is consciousness concerning the concrete demand of the good.

That presents the conscience as a bundle of knowledge and willingness—as knowledge of the good, of something concretely good in itself for me. The conscience is knowledge of my willingness. My willingness is directed toward the good. (That is why I am responsible if I do not want the good, namely, if I do not love it.) And that is why the conscience occurs in the form of a "feeling."

Feeling is an anthropological invariance consisting of an inner perception (*Erkenntnis*) of its own tendency. Feeling entails an inner knowledge (*Wissen*) of the life-based inclination of my own being or some part of my being. That is why feeling is always personal and not transferable.

The point here is merely to note that knowledge and willingness also lie in the conscience, namely, reason (*ratio*) and will (*voluntas*) in a real, existential unity. In the conscience, a person finds unity and overcomes the inner and outer discrepancy of life.

3. The conscience is not only a unity of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) and will but also a bridge to *transcendence*. It connects us with the True and the Good as such. "Conscientia obligat non virtute propria sed virtute praecepti divini" (Conscience does not oblige by virtue of its own power, but by virtue of divine precept [Thomas Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, d.39, q.3, a.3, ad3]). It is something that lets us discover our life as a "[given] duty," therefore as something not yet perfected, and put to our charge. "Everything that does not come from the conscience—conviction, *πιστις*—is sin" (Rom 14:23).

Through the conscience, I comprehend the personal, truthful, authentic meaning of my concrete existence. As a person, I have a nontransferable and irreplaceable role on earth, and actually a role to play. The conscience lets me recognize this role as an *Aufgabe* (duty), as a "gift" (*Gabe*) bestowed "upon" (*auf*) me, as something given to me in which I myself am involved, something that I *should* perfect (*voll-end*) and realize. That is why the conscience has the form of a "should," not as a burden imposed on me but as a gift constituting me. Whoever perceives the conscience as burden and not as gift, and accordingly as liberation, has not yet discovered the meaning of life, the meaning of "one's own" personal life. Everything else is an abstraction.

The term "should" as the manner of expression used by the conscience emerges in the form of question and answer—thus also the commandment.

God asked Cain, "What have you done?" In that encounter, the conscience emerges. The conscience is the human instrument that enables me to perceive both the living *You* who questions me and the existential obligation of my answer.

Only a human being on this earth can wonder about such things, for one now discovers the gift of existence as a duty, a calling that demands a response. And this response given in the conscience, this response expressed through existence makes one responsible, that is, response-able.

This is not just wordplay. Responsibility arises in my conscience, not in my knowledge (*Wissen*). Ideas (*Erkenntnis*) are not responsible (expressed in terms of ethics: I can have evil or bad thoughts without thereby being evil or bad if I do not consent to them)—or in my will (I can sense bad inclinations in myself without being responsible for them).

4. The really existing concrete conscience, *the existential conscience*, is neither purely natural nor only supernatural. It is rather actually real, and that is why we prefer to call it "existential." The point here is not to deny or weaken the clear, unobjectionable distinction between nature and super-nature. But no matter how valuable and purposeful this distinction may be for an essential clarification of the concepts with which our reason must unavoidably work, it should not supplant the existential unity of human reality.

And precisely in the conscience, we sense the fundamental insufficiency of a purely naturalistic observation, for the conscience is not an abstract capacity of our being but a concrete instrument to handle the things that are existentially given to us, with regard to their ontological-moral demand upon us. (Moral theology means not just a mere extension of a stoic *vivere secundum rationem* or *secundum naturam*, to live according to reason or according to nature, but seeks to provide a pattern for the full existential development of human personality—so that Man reaches his salvation, that is, his true perfection, in a genuine Christian sense, whereby the Sermon on the Mount, the Law of the Cross, and other Christian teachings remain no longer on the margins.)

God speaks in the conscience, where I hear His voice and answer Him. The conscience hears and hearkens to the most intimate voice within me, which comes from God and seeks to return to God. And because this happens concretely and within specific historical circumstances for each person, the conscience is never natural. It is the existentially real place, where God, and indeed Christ—*unus mediator* (the only mediator)—speaks to us. There is no purely natural conscience, as there is a natural reason, in a sense. Reason is something that I can abstract from my actual fund of experience; by contrast, conscience cannot be separated from its concrete existential situation. Conscience is always ontologically *Christ-laden*. Also for the pagans and unbelievers. Their conscience is not their reason. God does

not leave them forsaken. To think that mere reason will suffice is a residue of Deism. They have conscience, and God—always ontologically through Christ—speaks directly to them. This is the reason why a good pagan, one following the conscience, is saved, that is, also goes to heaven and—in other words—participates in Christ.

# 3

## FREEDOM AND CONSCIENCE

We now need only draw our conclusions.

### The Place of Freedom

A person is free in the conscience. Freedom presupposes knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) and will in existential unity—and it is located in the conscience.

A person is only free through acting from the innermost part. One does that by following the conscience.

A person is "bonded" to things and "bound" to God. Only the boundedness to God makes freedom possible—and one arrives at the realization of this boundedness only in the conscience.

The place of freedom is the conscience. I am not free because I do whatever I want, what occurs to me, in the superficial sense; I am also not free because I recognize something true. I am free because I "acknowledge" something true in my conscience and "approve" the good. I am free if I, from my innermost being, so act, so "am," that my innermost being can eventually so "be" my person.

I could recognize the true and yet remain unfree if I do not acknowledge the true in my conscience. A person is more than an idyllic, Socratic being, who purely as error causes evil or fails to realize the true.

I could want the good and still remain unfree if I do not actually approve the good in my conscience. (This is also meant in St. Paul's statements about the law of the flesh and the discord of the individual, who wills the good but does not do it.)

### The Liberation of Conscience

The conscience, however, has to be liberated first so that a person can really enjoy freedom. After the fall, our conscience became bonded and chained. Only a Redeemer can rescue us.

Conscience is the place of freedom. I can still be an unfree being, however, if I resist the voice of God—with qualification, one might also say: (if I resist) the grace of Christ, which comes to every person. Unfaithfulness to God is simultaneously "unfaithfulness to oneself."

Here the demands of the Gospel are fitting: "Whoever wants to save his soul . . ." "If a grain of wheat does not die . . ." and so on. Such statements are to be understood strictly metaphysically. Only Christ can achieve the fullness of human freedom.

I must purify my conscience of my drives and wishes, still more from my own thoughts and perceptions. In the conscience, I grasp the right, also against my own desire and against my "personal" views. Again evidence that the conscience is something more than mere knowledge or pure inclination.

### **Freedom of Conscience**

I should rely on my conscience, for it is the place of my freedom and the guideline of my action; but conscience is not concerned only with itself—that is, it is not an autonomous unit, without norm and communion, that would be the independent, existentially closed, ultimate authority over my actions.

The conscience is free as long as it is a real conscience, for its essence is to be the instrument of a person's boundedness to God and to other people. As soon as the individual conscience desires to rend this ontic boundedness, it would lose its freedom and thereby also cease being a conscience.

In this are interconnected all problems of the so oft misunderstood freedom of conscience.

### **Christian Freedom**

The main experience of freedom by the children of God cannot be recounted in a few arid words. Only the living Christian senses and experiences the meaning of being free here on the earth, free with the authentic freedom of the one bound—always through Christ—to God, namely, God's child, who is frightened and constricted by nothing, who is allied to God's omnipotence, and who feels bound to God and is thus also the victor in this world.

Our conscience is constantly threatened from inside and out. Only divine love, poured into our hearts, makes us strong enough to be free. If one loves, one is free. Ever since original sin, there has also been sham love, which offers only bonds, not boundedness. Only the ontological Christian love is thus able to enlighten and strengthen our conscience so that we attain true freedom.

## SECTION III

### THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE NEIGHBOR\*

*καὶ τις εστίν μου πλησίον*

Lk 10:29

1. "And who is my neighbor?" a doctor of the Law asked Christ, seeking to justify himself. The reply was the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Our neighbor is someone who is close to us, not physically (the priest and the Levite were very close to the wounded man in the parable), nor from the point of view of race, nation, or religion (as with the priest or the Levite), but from an ontological standpoint, from the perspective of communication, a communion of being that manifests itself in the consciousness of a spiritual community.

The entire Christian law is founded on God's love and our love for our neighbor, which are one and the same. To God, Man is a *person*, to the atheist he is an *individual*, and to the Christian he is a *neighbor*.

The very concept of *neighbor* involves a *distinction* between one man and another as *individuals* and an *affinity* between them as *persons*.

2. Since the Middle Ages, the European cultural evolution has shown a gradual weakening in the consciousness of radical human solidarity (partly as the result of medieval *heteronomic* exaggerations), which leads to an increasing tendency to fall prey to an atomized *autonomy* masked as nationalist, capitalist, and liberal *individualism*, which today suffers from an extreme opposite reaction known as *collectivism* or *communism*.

There is, however, a *middle way*, which strives to react to both these extremes. In the political order it is expressed in forms of socialism, or corporatism, or federalism. In the moral order it is the Christian ethic of respect for the person that is emphasized, and in the philosophical order it entails making room for common good.

We need to rediscover the meaning of "neighbor," and not only in our public and private moral life. We must find its foundations in the very nature of Man, in the *ontonomic* structure of human existence itself.

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\* Original French text: "Sur l'anthropologie du prochain," in *L'homme et son prochain. Actes du VIII<sup>e</sup> Congrès des sociétés de philosophie de langue Française* (Paris: PUP, 1956), 228–31. Translated by Geraldine Clark.

Any problem expressed in terms of pure autonomy leads us to a type of individualism that can only be selfish and mean, and the Christian *expressions* of the past few centuries are not always immune to this—for example, in believing that the duties “of charity” are not strictly an obligation, in speaking of the individual question of salvation, and so on.

The heteronomous view, on the other hand, yields to the totalitarian and collectivist temptation. The individual does not count; all that counts is the society here on earth, or that in heaven. In the past there were heteronomous *expressions* of the Christian concept of life, and these at times produce a certain outward resemblance between communism and Christianity—though it is a resemblance that does not correspond to reality.

3. The human being is not an *individual*. He is not a Leibnizean monad; he is not ontologically separate or independent from other beings, much less from other human beings.

Seen *from below*—τα κατώ, as Greek tradition puts it—Man clearly appears as an individual: neither my body nor my brain belongs to my neighbor. From a material point of view (and here the danger of falling into a materialistic perspective is very great), the principle of individuation certainly resides in matter, but also undoubtedly in quantity. Just as a table is not another table, so a man is not another man; he merely presents himself in the same way. In other words, like the table, I am a piece of matter. Yet I am also infinitely more and, besides, the analogy between the table and me works only from an exterior point of view (τα εξώ) because my body is not matter *in the same way* as a table is. Seen *from the outside*, to give another example, gender is manifest through differences in clothing and body shape, yet such a profound anthropological diversity cannot be defined with secondary phenomena.

Man *has* his own individuality, but he *is not* an individual. He is ontologically connected to all reality. Creation, original sin, redemption, culture, history, inheritance, family, sex, and practically everything that is human would be meaningless if Man were purely individual.

4. Man is a *person*; he is not isolated. *Primordially*, he is not an “*I*” but a “*you*” with a twofold *constitutive* nature and a *dialogal* structure. He is the ontological answer to an *I*, a (divine) *I am*, which, in calling him, gives him his *being*, but he is also the answer to those human *I who*, addressing to him,<sup>1</sup> allow him to *have* his being. These two relationships may respectively be called *vertical* and *horizontal*. We must make it clear straightforwardly, however, that they are not to be found on the same level, and that the horizontal bond is in some way incorporated in the vertical (in the same way, in fact, as there is only *one* Commandment).

Seen *from above* (τα ανω)—that is, from his highest reality, which incorporates the other layers of his being—Man appears as a person, even as a being having its own freedom (with all that this involves in the way of intellect and will in an embodied spirit), not aiming at a full self-production (though this would be an acceptable formula if the *self* is truly understood), but at completing Reality, at ensuring that Being is brought to completion, helping to fulfill life, or, in Christian terms, hastening the coming of God’s Kingdom or fulfilling Creation and Redemption.

The person is the being that controls and possesses itself, that *has* its own being. We might say that in the person the essence springs from its own existence. In other beings, existence is, so to speak, a special part of essence, or a way of being essence, while in the person it is the opposite: essence is the way of existence. It is personal existence that must, in a certain sense, be its essence. When this essence is complete, when it becomes what it must become, then the human person will be saved. Man receives his own existence, an act of existence that is

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<sup>1</sup> That is, in giving him an identity through dialogue.

granted him on loan, though perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Man possesses his own existence. He is a person "partaken of," he is a "*you*." Clearly, he *is* inasmuch as he is "*you*"; he is *that* whom the *I* defines, the name given to him, and he *has* his being because he responds to the gift given.

5. Although it has one single source, the name that defines him as Man, the gift that makes him Man, is a two-way street. We have referred to these two ways as vertical—that which comes from God and *makes him a person*—and horizontal—that which comes from the world that surrounds him and allows him to *have a personality*.

The most important factor in this "world" around us are the "others," not as *others* but as *neighbors*. My neighbor is not merely the person who lives nearby, he is that human *I* who calls me "you." My neighbor is the one who loves me, who sees me and "speaks to me," or hates and rejects me; in other words, he is the man who shows me *his* "you," who helps me to be myself because he makes it possible for me to love him, see him, and speak to him simply by calling him "you." And so through not a vicious but a vital circle, we all come to being, we come to Being. Just as God first loved us, so also we must first love others and discover them as our neighbors—and their response will tell us that it is they themselves who help us to possess, perfect, and "per-form" our being!

St. Paul told the Romans<sup>2</sup> that he who loves "the other" (*τον ετερον*) fulfills the Law, and the *Vulgata* translates this term as *proximum* (neighbor). Certainly, whoever loves someone else transforms him, ipso facto, into his neighbor. Christianity, moreover, tells us to convert all "others," including our enemies, into neighbors, not because this is the whim of a God of Justice, but because it is what corresponds to a reality that comes—if I may put it in this way—from a God of Love.

My neighbor, therefore, is part of my person as I am part of his—if he accepts me as such. Man cannot *be* without his neighbor if he is to remain a Man, that is, a human person, if he is not to abase himself and end up lower than an animal. Man is not without *his neighbor* because, in the end, true humanity is—and, above all, will be—exclusively a Mystic Body and, as the bold patristic<sup>3</sup> expression puts it, a single Person whose Head is the Word.

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<sup>2</sup> Rom 13:8.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., St. Augustine's "Whole Christ," whom Panikkar mentions elsewhere.



## SECTION IV

### A THEOLOGICAL MEDITATION ON AFRICA\*

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#### 1

#### Is "UNCIVILIZED" CHRISTIANITY POSSIBLE?

A representative of Western civilization once invited the astounded members of a small African tribe to listen to voices broadcast over a portable radio. After the whole tribe had listened for a long time to the white man's miraculous object, the chief, whose turn it was to speak, said on behalf of his people, "Wonderful power! But now please silence the box, it is preventing us from listening to the music of the woods."

Man is a limited and peculiar being, and just as he cannot serve two masters, neither can he live in two different cultures; he must choose between the noisy box and the music of the woods. This is Africa's situation. I say situation, not dilemma, because a simple historico-theological reflection makes it clear that we are not talking about personal choice when faced with alternatives, but rather a complex historical phenomenon in which human liberty becomes part of the social dynamism that overrides it. Furthermore, and this is another sociological fact, if we allow the encounter to be "free" (i.e., automatic), the sound box will necessarily replace the music of the woods.

I do not believe it is intellectually right to attempt to play down the importance of the problem. We are all acquainted with the much-quoted phrase by Novalis, "Europe will be Christian, or it will not be." Those who believe this statement to be exact should consider that the presupposition on which it is founded would then justify the provocative expression I use above: "uncivilized Christianity." This expression, in fact, recognizes the profound value of tradition, and claims that no human community and no culture can exist without remaining

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\* In *Studi cattolici* 5, no. 23 (1961): 3-7 (Rome).

true to its past—which, in the case of Europe, is a Christian past. There is no reason why this law should not be valid for Africa also.

Thus formulated, our expression has retained a certain ambiguity that carries all the tension and the problems of the current situation: Africa will be Christian in a different way from Europe, or it will not be at all, in the sense that either it will not be Christian or it will no longer be *Africa* but only the geographic African continent, just as Australia is Asia only on geographic maps.

In no Christian text is it written that the irruption of Faith must leave the Law intact, unchanged; or that Grace does not transform nature in any way; or that the cross does not demand sacrifice and even death. We must convince ourselves that both alternatives are Christianly possible, and it is useless to seek refuge in accommodating humanistic attitudes that would ultimately appear as illegitimate concessions. History itself offers clear examples of populations that have paid the price of conversion with the surrender and even the death of their traditional values.

Something that should at all costs be avoided is what may be defined (using a strong expression that must be interpreted with the utmost caution) as "spiritual blackmail"—taking advantage, even unconsciously and with all good intentions, of the domineering and superior attitude of a civilization for the purpose of imposing a faith that is beyond any form of civilization and is undeniably compatible with a state of mankind that, from a European point of view, may appear "uncivilized." Those who do not believe "uncivilized" Christianity to be possible have basically not yet overcome Pelagianism. Indeed, it is through recognition of the supreme liberty of the Supernatural that we are prompted to believe it possible that hatred for one's own life<sup>1</sup> and death to self may be valid for all populations and civilizations. It may be possible for the dying culture to come back to life as turmoil capable of transforming a much larger group.

The theological mentality of the so-called age of discovery was characterized by the fact that it identified Christianity with Christendom (not only geographically but also theologically) and by its conviction that the so-called indigenous civilizations were destined to disappear since, strictly speaking, nothing of any real value (no "woodland music") could be lost by replacing them with the European culture. Following the profound changes in European history, and after four centuries of experience in Asia, Africa, and America, both the cultural foundation of the former idea and the Renaissance optimism of the latter have lost all substance. Christianity is not bound to any culture (being capable, in fact, of fostering cultural pluralism) and extra-European cultures are not so much "primitive" as *primigenial* and are also, in a certain sense, more genuine than the European culture.

We must not forget, moreover (and this third very important factor is one that complicates the question enormously), that Christianity, *de jure*, is not a pure doctrinal essence fallen from heaven, but a Church incarnated in time and space. At the same time, we cannot ignore that, *de facto*, the time and space of the Church are Mediterranean categories. A chemically pure Christianity, a totally African Church, *hic et nunc*, would constitute a schism: thus the enormous significance of the current historical moment, which can only move toward the right solution in a spiritual climate that demands purifying sacrifices, however painful they may be to both sides. Theological colonialism, in fact, is as dangerous and harmful as ecclesiastical nationalism.

Only in three or four places in the Mediterranean area, when visibility is perfect (without the clouds of prejudice and resentment) can the two continents be seen; yet even then Europe

<sup>1</sup> Lk 14:26.

appears as a daunting, barren crag, and Africa as a mirage, shrouded in the breath of a great sleeping animal. The African soul trembles before a population that has no sensitivity to plant life, and the European soul smiles uneasily in the face of ethnic groups with irreproachable instincts. Only the Christian spirit (which is neither the Hellenic *nous* nor the Latin *mens*, but an incarnate spirit) can embrace in a synthesis of love the whole Man, with his complex humanity and his shared divinity.

Regarding the actual conditions of this encounter, let us attempt to pinpoint a few ideas.

There is a well-known story about an African tribe, which tells that one night the totem was destroyed in a storm. Forty-eight hours later the whole tribe was dead—they were no longer able to bear the weight of existence without the mediating symbol that united them with the transcendent, real world. Their life had lost all meaning and, consequently, life itself ceased.

It is a fact that African man is losing faith in his own religion. It is also true that in Africa, as on no other continent, the number of Catholics is increasing at a faster rate than the population—although Islam holds first place in this strange *transfert*. And it is equally true that, in Africa, Christianity has developed the most in the very places where it has broken away from the Western culture, where it has created an African Christian life by reconnecting, to varying degrees, with the local traditions. When the work of civilization goes hand in hand with evangelization, the former prevails and usually seriously hinders the latter.

Are we to conclude from these considerations, then, that the Church is, or is obliged to be, the enemy of the development and progress of the African peoples? Certainly not. First of all, contrary to the opinions of post-Renaissance Europe, the Church, according to the example of its Master, has never forgotten that he came to preach the gospel to the poor, and that he launched one of his harshest accusations against those who gain their satisfaction in the world.<sup>2</sup> Second, the Church does not make the mistake of considering progress and evolution as independent and unquestionably good and desirable values. Things have their own pace and their own hierarchy. The hierarchy is clear, and the pace is based on the same tempo that accompanies the Church's growth, left by the Lord to be freely controlled by the will of his servants. The desire to force the tempo of this pace appears to be one of the greatest sociological dangers threatening Africa today.

Here is another factor that cannot be played down: the whole of Africa aspires to assimilate values imported from the European or American West and, de facto, however positive they may be, these values are received by the African mentality as substitutes for their own shaky religiousness. To a large part of Africa, Christianity is merely a good channel for those values that populations defining themselves as Christian claim to possess. At most, Christianity would offer a certain moral standard for coping in the jungle of "modern" civilization, just as, in the past, the ancient religion of the Natives provided them with recipes for finding a passage through the forest.

We are convinced that what Africa most needs today is contact with the evidence of the two extremes (which, as we know, touch each other) of Christian life, that is, a naked, eschatological Christianity free of any compromises or bonds with modern civilization, and a Christianity incarnate and rooted in the technological civilization, without being enslaved to it but, rather, living within it a full Christian life that is, in the end, identical to that of the former extreme. The first plants the wheat, the second cultivates the earth; between them enough "electrical tension" is generated to create the spark of divine grace, which is what brings about the real increase.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lk 6:24-25.

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Cor 3:6.

These two extremes, moreover, give us the different kind of evangelization that we referred to at the beginning, which represents not so much the means for converting Africa to something *else* as the fruit of its *own* slow conversion and its *own* incorporation into the universal crown of Catholicism. A few thoughts on this subject constitute the third point in our meditation on Africa.

It is very common, in the mission countries, for parents to send their children to Christian schools for the sole purpose of having them learn a Western language and skill. The implicit, and many times explicit, warning to these children, however, is that they must not let themselves be "contaminated" by the Christian influences that such an education may impart. In fact, the best of them are wonderfully capable of filtering out the tiniest particles of pure Christianity from the training they receive in these schools and universities. Until very recently the civilizing function of Christianity was classified as an apologetic strategy.

## THE RELIGIOUS CRISIS OF A CONTINENT

While it is to a certain degree united, it is evident that the immense continent of Africa is totally without uniformity, and that between East, North, and South Africa there are much greater differences than those that may be found in Europe. From this point on we refer to so-called black Africa, though we believe that, mutatis mutandis, the same applies to the rest of the continent also.

The theological principle of adaptation, which has been so extensively discussed in recent years, does not refer to adaptation as the best spiritual strategy or most effective method of conversion, but is based, rather, on the Church's right, and duty, to assimilate all human values in order to redeem them, gradually integrating them with its own ontological growth, until finally the face of the earth and all things are renewed. The present-day form of Western Christianity (and this also has been said more than enough) does not seem capable of carrying out this integration. Nevertheless, rather than dwelling on this particular problem we would like here to consider a few values that the Church expects from the African contribution in the context of the various aspects.

### The Earthly Aspect

We only have to remember Christianity's struggle against any form of spiritualistic gnosis to realize how Christian the African concept of the *constitutive bond* between man and the earth really is, and the extent of the Church's expectations regarding an increased emphasis on the dogma of the resurrection of the flesh and the theme of the new earth and the new heaven. The salvation of Man is not the liberation of the apex of his soul,<sup>1</sup> but the glorification of his whole being by the One in whom dwells the Godhead bodily.<sup>2</sup> The evangelical message is not merely a doctrine directed to the human intellect, but a way of life that involves the whole being, which (to use Western categories) extends as far as Man's vegetable and mineral origins.

The bond of African man with the earth, his earthly roots, his instinctive feelings, his "obscure" rhythms in tune with the earth, and his seamless integration with the cycles of nature remind us that Man is something more than pure thought, and a little more than mere history; that his spirit is constitutively carnal and his flesh is indissolubly spiritual; that his worship of God is more than a mere tribute of the mind; and that human solidarity extends not only to other humans but to all things.

It is obvious that many African expressions of life are exaggerated or should be incorporated in a more organized context, but the fact remains that in this area there is a series

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<sup>1</sup> The *apex mentis* of medieval theology. [Ed. note.]

<sup>2</sup> Col 2:9.

of values that the African Church may convey to the community of the children of God, gathered together in his mystical (but also visible) Body, the Church.

### The Angelic Aspect

The Bible tells us that the Creator thought it was not good for Man to be alone.<sup>3</sup> And indeed, Man is not the only inhabitant on this earth, as Africa reminds us. Man not only lives with woman but also has dealings, even in this world, with spirits—and the book of Ecclesiastes tells us we should not speak ill of them. Animism may well be a degenerate form of religion, but in a cosmos peopled by forces and spirits, African belief is not as meaningless as the nineteenth-century "rationalistic philosophies of religion" would have had us believe. Not only is the material universe in some way united with Man, but strictly speaking, the material cosmos does not actually have a separate and independent existence from the spiritual cosmos. To claim that everything has a spirit of its own does not necessarily mean admitting a sort of hypostatic union between spiritual beings and matter. Indeed, Africa has never, or almost never, formulated a doctrine in these terms. The African consciousness, nevertheless, has not lost its sensitivity for the great adventure of a unified creation, an adventure of universal proportions, in which Man has a part to play.

### The Demonic Aspect

There is a well-known theory that states that the devil's primary precaution in the Western technological civilization is to keep hidden, or to make people deny him, because he is, in himself, an irrefutable witness of the supernatural. The West has all but lost the meaning of history as a battleground where Man does not fight alone, where the entire universe returns to God through a cosmic struggle in which Man's role is important, but it is not the only role.<sup>4</sup>

While traditionally angels and demons are defined as "pure" spirits, the African is able to recognize, thanks to his extremely acute sensitivity, the presence and the effects of those he would call "impure" spirits, for the sake of identifying them not so much as being stained inside as for being prisoners and slaves of things. If this demoniac vision is transferred to the rational order the result will be a Gnostic vision of the world; this, however, is not the case with Africans, because their experience of the demoniac does not touch the sphere of the intellect, which brings us to the fourth aspect.

### The Mythical Aspect

Without entering into broader disquisitions on this complex phenomenon, we may say that post-Cartesian Western civilization has allowed the positive sentiment of myth to fade. Man is not only intellect, and intellect itself is not pure reason. The populations of Africa reveal a certain virginity of spirit that can be related to their profound sense of myth or, in other words, to the awareness that contact with reality is not a mere question of knowledge or a simple act of will, but implies a certain vital communion with reality itself, based on the feeling of being immersed in it, not so much in the actuality of the present as in the past and, specifically, the *ab initio*, the *illo tempore* of myth. For this reason, myth demands cult, which is active participation in the mystery of the universe. The Christianization of myth is at least as important as the conversion of ideas.

<sup>3</sup> Gen 2:18.

<sup>4</sup> See Eph 6:12.

### 3

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE WEST

Not all African values are positive, and likewise, from a Christian point of view, the encounter between these cultures and the European civilization does not have to be negative. The situation is obviously delicate, but realizing its difficulties is undoubtedly a good start.

Christianity cannot repudiate the civilization that continues to support it, however flawed and abusive that civilization may be; at the same time, however, it cannot identify with it, nor play along with it for too long.

It would be presumptuous to attempt to predict the future of Africa, but one thing is certain: this ancient virgin land must be penetrated by the seed of the kingdom of God, whatever form it may take. Yet it must be the least of all seeds,<sup>1</sup> not the fully grown tree, the dense foliage, or the powerful trunk transplanted from other places. It must be the pure, simple, genuine, naked—and difficult—message of the word of God, without any additions of any kind. The rest, the development, will be given as an extra.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 13:32.

<sup>2</sup> See Mt 6:33.



## SECTION V

### THE EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF TRUTH\*

*καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς*<sup>1</sup>

Jn 8:32

\* \* \*

### INTRODUCTION

Truth, like the Latin god *Janus*, has two faces. The first, facing inward, looks only into our conscience and is its *logical* aspect; the other, however, is focused not on the inner sphere but on the outside world, on things themselves. Not infrequently, philosophers, like diligent guardians of the spirit, have considered this *ontological* or, more accurately, ontic aspect of truth as a sort of spiritual infidelity or philosophical frivolity.

After Cartesius, the main current of European philosophy dealt almost exclusively with *ideas*, culminating in the scrupulous phenomenological analysis of E. Husserl.<sup>2</sup> To Husserl, phenomenology has to do with *νοήσεις*, with ideas as they appear to our impartial and purified intellect, which has suspended (*ἐποχή*) the disturbing world of existences. Hence, thanks to our "eidetic intuition," we are able to describe things just as they actually appear, as *φαινόμενα*.

It is very important, nevertheless, to understand that appearance (*maya*, illusion, *δόξα*, *Erscheinung*, image, symbol, etc.) is none other than the manifestation, the epiphany of being itself (*brahman*, *νούμενον*, *Ding an sich*, reality, etc.). This means that being is not only the *background* of appearance, but also that appearance is the *prior ground* of being. Appearance and being are not, in fact, two totally different and independent realities (things), but one

\* Orig. text: "L'incontro dell'induismo e del cristianesimo," *Maya e Apocalisse* (Rome: Abete, 1966), chap. 11. Translated by Geraldine Clarkson.

<sup>1</sup> "Et veritas liberabit vos" [and the truth shall make you free].

<sup>2</sup> See *Logische Untersuchungen* (Halle, 1900); id., *Ideen zu einer reinen Phaenomenologie und phaenomenologische Philosophie* (Halle [id. pub.], 1928).

single thing. Appearance is being itself, exactly as it appears,<sup>3</sup> and it is only through appearance that I can enter into being.<sup>4</sup>

The consequence of this constitutive relationship between being and appearance is extremely important and gives phenomenology a directly philosophical function, thus enabling it to be applied metaphysically. In other words, phenomenology does not need to be recorded in the scheme of an idealistic philosophy; nor only, in fact, is it the correct method of gnoseology (criteriology), but it is also the first step toward anthology<sup>5</sup> and, therefore, a philosophy in itself.<sup>6</sup>

Phenomenology may also be used as a method of essential ontology, metaphysics of essences, and also as the most suitable vehicle for existential anthology, or metaphysics of existences.<sup>7</sup> Existences, or the existential dimensions of beings, may, in fact, be considered in a phenomenological study.<sup>8</sup> This type of phenomenology should, nevertheless, be accompanied by an essential phenomenology, and these two together may represent the final stage of ontology, which transcends phenomenology, since the phenomenological method *discloses only how things appear*—both as essences and as existences—and not *what things are*.

We now take this existential phenomenological method (without, for now, subjecting it to a more direct examination<sup>9</sup>) and apply it to one of the greatest philosophical problems, in order to examine the second face of truth, the "secular" aspect—which, incidentally, is the aspect that has been emphasized by Christian thinkers from the beginning up until the time of Descartes (and again today) and also by certain Indic schools of philosophy. It goes without saying that the smallest philosophical problem involves philosophy as a whole and that everything depends on everything; since we cannot, however, speak about everything at the same time, we do not attempt to define *what truth is*, but only *how truth exists*. This phenomenological essay aims, therefore, to be considered valid for most of the main trends of thought.

Phenomenology is thus used here not as a logical analysis of the data of our consciousness in the sphere of the essential within the context of the Husserlian *epoché*, but as the existential method for discovering *what exists*, without inquiring deeply into *what is "that which exists"* or, in other words, without entering into the innermost sanctuary of that which *is* (the truth, in our case). Essential phenomenology seeks to analyze *that-which-appears-to-me* (the object,

<sup>3</sup> "La chose en soi, Grenzbegriff, muet, ne teste pas latente derrière les phénomènes en qualité d'inconnaisable, mais elle apparir en eux, encore que pas adéquatement. C'est pour cela seulement qu'elle devient objet de connaissance" [The "thing unto itself" mute in the capacity of a "limit concept" (*Grenzbegriff*), does not remain concealed behind phenomena as unknowable, but is revealed in them, albeit not adequately; and it is only for this reason that it becomes knowable] (S. Boulgakov, *Le Paradelet* [Paris, 1946], 344).

<sup>4</sup> See Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Wahrheit* (Einsiedeln, 1947), 69ff. See also "Die Dinge sind tatsaechlich als verhuellte enthuellt, und in dieser Gestalt werden sie zum Gegenstand der Erkenntnis" [Things are in fact unveiled as veiled, and in this form they become objects of knowledge], 234; "das Enthuelltsein des Seins ist als solches seine tiefe Verhuellung" [the unveiling of being is, as such, its profound veiling], 235; see also 246, 254, etc.

<sup>5</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 5th ed. (Halle, a.d.S.), 27–39.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), esp. the Introduction.

<sup>7</sup> For these two types of metaphysics see E. Gilson, *L'Etre et l'Essence* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1948).

<sup>8</sup> See H. Conrad-Martius, "Realontologie," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung* 6 (1929).

<sup>9</sup> We are perfectly aware of how audacious our attempt is and the possible consequences it implies.

*ob-jectum*, that which is thrown, placed, or given in front of me). Existential phenomenology, on the other hand, proposes simply to describe *that-which-appears*, since I am not a pure spectator of the process of the world, but am involved in it; rather, I am a player (or, if you prefer, a factor) in this world itself.<sup>10</sup>

We have, of course, no intention of negating the essential face of truth with the implicit validity of epistemological considerations, nor do we profess to offer an exhaustive phenomenological description of the truth. We merely wish to repropose a classical, traditional philosophical method while attempting to describe some of the aspects of existential truth.<sup>11</sup> Husserl himself spoke of an "experience of truth"<sup>12</sup>—we believe that this experience transcends the essential dimension of truth.

This study is made up of three parts:

- *An ascending analysis*—ἀνά-λυσις—of the presence of truth in the world; this analysis seeks to discover the metaphysical foundation of truth: truth is being, reality (I), and rests on the ultimate reality, that is, God (II). Nevertheless, it is not God as God that is truth, but God as self-knowing Spirit—in other words, God as Logos (III).
- *A descending analysis*—κατὰ-λυσις—of the limitations inherent to human truth; existential phenomenology, in fact, though without negating the ascending analysis and its consequences ('Truth is absolute, true, one, etc.'), discovers that human truth is relative (IV), negative (V), prone to error (VI), pluralistic (VII), and imperfect (VIII).
- *An existential analysis*—παρὰ-λυσις—of the anthropological characteristics of truth; this analysis describes two of the main connotations of truth itself: *purification* and *meditation* (IX).

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<sup>10</sup> It is not up to us to develop the *circular* philosophical implications of this method. We use the word "circular" because we are all enclosed within a circle—not a vicious, but a vital circle; the philosophy that a man has (that a man chooses?) depends, in fact, on the method he chooses (on the method he has?), and vice versa. This method and this philosophy, moreover, are subject—truly subject—to the type of man one is (see Fichte). Yet man philosophizes, and his philosophy belongs also to his being. See the profoundly metaphysical meaning of Aristotle's ξητου·μένη ἐπιστήμη.

<sup>11</sup> The many notes accompanying this essay (most of which are quotations from texts of different religious and philosophical traditions) should not be interpreted as a benign indulgence in superficial forms of syncretism, but rather as examples of an existential approach to the problems discussed and suggestions for a more in-depth analysis of certain fundamental intuitions of our human culture.

<sup>12</sup> "Erlebnis der Wahrheit," *Logische Untersuchungen, Prolegomena zur reinen Logik* (Halle, 1928), 190.

## THE ASCENDING PATH

### Truth and Reality

Whatever the cause of error may be, its nature lies in assertion, proposition. In the case of truth it is exactly the opposite: whatever relationship truth may have with judgment, its nature lies in the thing itself.<sup>1</sup> Taking the classic example of Indic philosophy, if we say, "This is a snake," we are in error, but if we say, "This is a rope," we are in truth.<sup>2</sup> If we suppress the first proposition we completely abolish the error, but we do not abolish the truth by suppressing the second. The 'this', what 'this' is, remains, and remains truth, regardless of any *human* judgment. The 'this' of the false proposition also remains, and will not be false, but true, as long as the 'this' refers to the extra-mental rope or the imagined snake (true as imagined snake). Thus, the nature of truth is directly related to the nature of the 'this'. If S is the subject of the proposition and P is its predicate, the phrase 'S is P' represents a *true* assertion, but only the subject is *the truth*.<sup>3</sup> S is that which is truth, which means that truth lies in reality itself, that truth is what *is*, that truth is within being itself.<sup>4</sup> P is never truth,

<sup>1</sup> However, this does not mean we deny that, in relation to historical human existence, truth and falsehood are two aspects of the same disclosing process of being (see M. Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, 3rd ed. [Frankfurt a. M., 1954], 19ff.). Nevertheless, this is not part of our existential-phenomenological problem.

<sup>2</sup> It seems that this example first appeared in Hindu literature in Gauḍapāda's Kārikā on the *Mandū* II.17–18, meaning that it is probably of Buddhist origin and can be found in many ancient Buddhist texts. See Gauḍapāda, *The Agamāśāstra*, trans. and with notes by Vidhushekha Bhattacharya (University of Calcutta, 1943), 28. See the Aristotelian opposition between τὰ ἀληθινά, the real object, and τὰ γεγραμμένα, imagined or defined copies (*Polit.* III.1281b12). We might also cite, as a mere suggestion for a historical study, "Just as men who in the darkness see nothing clearly and mistake a rope for a serpent" (John Chrysostom, *Expositio in Matth.* VI.19ff. [PG 57.290], *apud* W. Shewring, *Rich and Poor in Christian Tradition* (London: Burns, Gates & Washbourne, 1948), 86).

<sup>3</sup> The subject does not refer to the gnoseological subject of a known object, but to reality, to the ontological ὑπόστασις rather than the logical ὑποκείμενον that underlines every assertion. The reader should note that when we speak of subject and object, it is not in reference to an idealistic order of thought spanning from Descartes to Hegel, but in conformity to an aspect that is realistic, existential, and therefore closer to the genuine Scholastic philosophy of the Christian Middle Ages.

<sup>4</sup> Truth in Sanskrit is *tattvam*, but also *satyam*, which actually means reality (deriving from *as—being*). See *CU* VI.8.7; *Taittiriya Up.* II.I, etc. In Indic Vedāntism this *sai*, *satyam* is always one of the three main attributes of the Godhead. The Absolute may be described equally as *satyam*, *jñānam*, or *ānantanam*—Reality, Knowledge, or Infinite (*Taittiriya Up.*, loc. cit.) or, according to Late Vedānta, as *sacciddānanda*, Being, Knowledge (?), or Bliss. See the terms preferred by Greek theology regarding the Trinity: ἀλήθεια, φῶς, ζωή, truth, light, life. See also the expressions πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας (Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) and πατήρ τῆς ἀληθείας (*II Epist. Clementis* III.1st, XX.5).

unless it is identified with S<sup>5</sup>; otherwise P will be true insofar as it is a part of S, but it will never be *the truth*.

We must be careful not to confuse the classic distinction that exists between the logical concept and the metaphysical concept of truth. The *locus* of the former lies in judgment, whereas the latter must be sought in the thing itself. Distinction, however, does not solve all the problems, since truth is not just a concept.<sup>6</sup> The truth of S is not, in fact, the truth of a part of the proposition 'S is P', but the actual basis of what appears as S in the assertion.<sup>7</sup>

### Truth Is God

Truth is reality, truth is S, truth is the subject of an assertion. But what is S? What is the Subject?

"This is a rope" is a true proposition and, as we have already said, *the truth is 'this'*, the subject. But when I say '*this*', the subject of the first proposition ("this is a rope") is transformed into the predicate, becoming the object of the second (*This is a rope*). Therefore, the '*this*' (predicate) may be true, but it cannot be *the truth*. I cannot say, in fact, or even think '*this*' without converting it into an object. As long as things cannot be established as subjects, to me they will always remain objects; they may even be true (true, that is, as objects) but they will never be *the truth*. And the truth is absolutely necessary to the veracity of any assertion.

In order to find the subject, therefore, we must apply a sort of phenomenological reduction.

Now, where might I find the pure Subject, the pure '*this*'? Not in any object, obviously, nor even in the subject of any proposition, because as soon as the latter is considered outside of its assertion, my thought immediately transforms it into an object. I have only one way out, therefore—myself. If I am able to identify the '*this*' with myself, in fact, then S will no longer be an object but a pure subject. Now, is this possible?

Consequently, 'S is P' must be converted to 'I am P', and this change is important because we are not dealing with pure dialectics. Phenomenology, in fact, is the philosophical method by which we analyze mere ontological *data* (truly offered or given within the horizon of my existence, or, if you like, the space of my consciousness). 'I am P' is a purely dialectical assertion, unless I discover the P that I am. In other words, I am not a real subject—and, therefore, I am not truth—if I am unable to find the identical predicate of myself. This means that I must be *ontologically* able to declare *Who I am*, that is, *to be* what I am, if the 'I' (of 'I am P') must be truth, the subject. I cannot satisfy this requisite, however, as long as I am in this world.<sup>8</sup>

I am not my body, I am not my mind, I am not my spirit or even my consciousness. It is true, of course, that I have a body, a mind, and a spirit, but I cannot identify with any of the things I have or partake of.<sup>9</sup> Nor can I identify my self with my *ego*, since I am not only my *ego*, as it is *bis et nunc*. My *ego* is undoubtedly everything I am *now*, but it is not what I was, much less what I will be. It is far more correct, in fact, to say that I *am* what I *will be* than to

<sup>5</sup> See the classic principle of Scholastic philosophy, *Verum et ens convertuntur* [Truth and being are equivalent].

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the spirit in which the problem of truth should be contemplated, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Wahrheit*, op. cit., 11ff.

<sup>7</sup> See the profoundly metaphysical sense of truth in St. Thomas's *Sum. Theol.*, I, q.16, and *De Veritate*, q.1ff.

<sup>8</sup> "De me scio te mihi lucente," says St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.5.7 ("What I know of myself I know because you grant me light").

<sup>9</sup> See the comment on the *Mandū* attributed to Śāṅkārā, and in the Kārikā, II.38 by Gaudapāda, on inner and outer truth and its transposition into absolute truth.

affirm that I am what I happen to be now, since the true potentials and hopes of my being are not yet present in my *ego*. And I certainly *am* not this mean and selfish ego that I find is still within me. I will be my self; but I am-not-yet, seeing that my 'nature' is not yet perfect, not yet born, not yet *natura*.<sup>10</sup> It (the self that I am seeking) cannot be the changing subject of merely relative human periods and is very different from what has been and what will be.<sup>11</sup> It simply *is* (in a supratemporal way).<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, the expression *my ego* does not have a definite meaning. What, in fact, does *my* mean? What sort of *ego-limitation* does it represent?<sup>13</sup> The ego is the ego; the I is the I—My would mean the ego that is me, that is, the ego that is *of me*. *My* ego can never, therefore, be the absolute Subject we are seeking. *My* ego is always an object, *that which is of me*. It is always a predicate (of me): 'I am only the ego of myself', that is, I am not the real, ultimate I,<sup>14</sup> since there exists (so to speak) a more profound I within me.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See R. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza* (Madrid, 1951), 292.

<sup>11</sup> See "anyatra bhūtācca bhavyācca" [different (being elsewhere) from the past and the future], *KathU* II.14.

<sup>12</sup> See St. John's expression referring to God—and Christ: "ὁ ὁν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἔρχομενος"—"qui est, et qui erat, et qui venturus est" [(He) which is, and which (always) was, and which is (still) to come] (Rev 1:4.8). On the same line of thought See *id.* 21:6, etc.; see also Heb 18:8; See *RV* X.90.2 and Rāmānuja's *Gitabhāṣyā* IX.19.

<sup>13</sup> See Śāṅkārā criticizing those who confuse the *ātman* with the individual *ego*, *Gitabhāṣyā* II.19.

<sup>14</sup> "And the universe resounds with the joyful cry: I am!", writes Scriabin, *Poem of Ecstasy* (cited by A. K. Coomaraswamy in *The Dance of Shiva* [Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1948], 92).

<sup>15</sup> This is a concept that recurs often in Christian tradition. See St. Augustine's famous "intimus intimo meo" [nearer to me than I am to myself] and the expressions used by Thomas Aquinas in *Sum. Theol.*, I, q.8 (esp. a.1) and q.105 (esp. a.5); See also I, q.18, a.4, ad 3; and *In I Sento* d.370, q.1, a.1, and *In III Sento* d.32, q.1., a., ad 2. We include also a lesser-known citation from Meister Eckhart: "Gott ist mir näher, als ich mir selber bin" [God is nearer to me than I am to myself], *Deutsche Predigten*, no. 36 (Munich: Quint, 1955), 323. See also "Dass Gott . . . den Dingen innerlicher und naturhafter innwohnt, als die Dinge in sich selbst sind" [For God . . . dwells with them more inwardly and naturally than things do within themselves], *Predigt* 58 (Quint, 425), and again, from another translation, "I am closer to you than you are yourself" (Ibn' Arabi, *Tajalliyat*, LXXXI). All this means: (1) That only through a theological reduction of the creature, as opposed to a purely phenomenological reduction, is it possible to "find" God in it and, therefore, to transcend—eminently, of course (see Thom. Aquin., *Sum. Theol.*, I, q.4, a.2)—the ego and reach the Absolute. (See also St. Augustine's famous words: "Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi, in interiorum hominem habitat veritas" [Do not wander far and wide but return into yourself], *de vera religione*, 1.39, no. 72, PL 34.154; and the immanence-transcendence polarity "tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo" [You were deeper within than my own deepest self, and higher than my own highest self], *Confessions*, 3.6; and (2) that the ultimate, final "subject" of the creature is the divine I. This was also the intuition of Simone Weil: "Qui dit je, ment!" [He who says I, lies!]. I wonder whether the idea of a transcendent self might in some way find evidence in St. Paul's expression in Ac 20:24—"ποιῶμε τὴν ψυχὴν τηλεῖαν ἐμαυτῷ" ("nec facio animam meam pretiosorem quam me" [neither count I my life dear unto myself]); see also for the "intimus intimo meo" of the perspicacious page by Calvinus: "Quod si nostri non sumus, sed Domini . . . ergo ne vel ratio nostra, vel voluntas in consilio nostris factisque dominetur. . . . Nostri non sumus: ergo qua ad licet oblisciamur nosmetipos ac nostra omnia. Rursum Dei sumus: illi ergo vivamus et moriamur" [For if we are not our own, but the Lord's (...) then neither is our own reason or will to rule our acts and counsels. . . . We are not our own; therefore, as far as possible, let us forget ourselves and the things that are ours. Again, we are God's; let us, therefore, live and die to him], *Institutiones Cristianae Religionis*, book 3, ch. 7 (*Opera Calvini*, Brunsvigae, 1864, vol. II, col. 505). And again, "Das Reich Gottes, das ist in euch" [The kingdom of God is within you] (Lk 17:21; Mt 12:28). Wer das Reich finden will—das

In pursuing the ultimate subject we have had to transcend the *ego* and face the ultimate Self.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, truth is S, but S is S only when there is identification between S and P—when 'S is P' is converted to 'S is S'; when P has dissolved and merged together with S, in such a way that the subject is able to present itself as both Subject and Object in the same act.<sup>17</sup>

Only an S that is free and knows can present itself as P; but only an S that is absolutely free and absolutely capable of knowing can identify with itself.<sup>18</sup> Our contingency, which is also a phenomenological fact, keeps us from falling prey to egotropy. Ultimately, we cannot say—much less be—"I".<sup>19</sup>

*I is I* in the absolute identity that we are seeking—I am who I am,<sup>20</sup> *Abamasmi*.<sup>21</sup> Now, this may be the absolute Self within me, but not my *ego*. The absolute Self is the proper name of God,<sup>22</sup> He is he who is,<sup>23</sup> or more precisely, He is the only one who can say "I am I" or,

ist Gott . . . der muss es da suchen, wo es ist: das ist in dem innersten Grunde, wo Gott der Seele weit näher und inwendiger ist, als sie sich selbst ist" [Those who wish to find the kingdom—which is God . . . must look for it where it is, that is, within, where God is far closer and more inward to the soul than it is to itself] (J. Tauler, *Predigt, Quae mulier habens dragmas, apud Ein Textbuch aus der altdeutschen Mystik*, ed. H. Kunisch [Hamburg (Rowohlt) (Klassiker der Lit. U. d. Wiss.), 1958], 82).

<sup>16</sup> See the following testimony, which should be added to those we will mention later on: "It happens, however, and is sometimes necessary, that this self be referred to according to the custom of the world, which does not know how to speak in any other way, yet when I name myself or am called by others inwardly I say: my self is God, nor is any other self known to me except my God" (St. Catherine of Genoa, *Vita* 14 [P. Debongnie, *Sainte Catherine de Gênes (Etudes Carmelitaines)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959), 49]). See also Jacopone Da Todi, *Laude*, 60, 58: "Vivere eo e non eo e l'esset meo non esset meo" [To live I and not I and to be mine not to be mine], *Laudi*, Trattato e atti, ed. F. Ageno (Florence: Le Monnier, 1953), 243. See also "Che che te parca non è, tanto è alto quel che è" [What it seems to you is not, so high is what it is], Jacopone Da Todi, op. cit., 241; also the comment by Catherine that "all things visible and created are not and have no true being in themselves; so great is that which is, namely God, in whom is all true being," loc. cit., and, further on, "the being of man cannot truly be called 'being,' but rather 'lack of being'" (*ibid.*, 51).

<sup>17</sup> See the description of the subject by Hans Urs von Balthasar: "Ein Seiendes nun, das sich selber ermessen kann, weil es fuer sich selber enthuellt ist, wird Subjekt genannt . . . sein Sein hat die besondere Form des Selbstbewusstseins," *Wahrheit*, op. cit., 35 [A being that is capable of measuring itself is called a subject, as it is open, disclosed to itself . . . its being has the special form of self-consciousness].

<sup>18</sup> Kant had perceived correctly that no P is capable of totally identifying with S. The 'Ding an sich' is unknowable because no 'sich' is identical to 'Ding', except in God. P expresses the predictability of S, but not its identity. The latter is beyond any possible attribute.

<sup>19</sup> See the voice of Christian tradition: every being "in sola causa prima habet esse absolute et simpliciter" [has its absolute and total being only in the first cause] (Eckhart, *Expos. in Joban.* 1.1–2, no. 44, op. cit.; see also St. Aug., *De Gen. ad Litt.*, V.15; Anselm, *Monolog*, chap. 34 (PL 158.189); Thom. Aquin., *In Joban*, ch. I, lect. 2 (694a); Bonavent., *In 1 Sent.*, c.36, a.2; q.1 arg.3, etc. (cited *apud* Echardi, *Op. Omn.* in b.l.).

<sup>20</sup> See Ex 3:13ff.

<sup>21</sup> See *BUL* 4.1. See also 10—*abambrahmāsmīti*.

<sup>22</sup> It is useful to remember that the sacred syllable 'om' also means 'yes', 'amen'; i.e. it is an affirmation, a 'Yes'. See 1 Cor 1:20. See the Hebrew *emeth*, the column on which a building rests, etc. From *emet* derives *amen* (see J. Danielou, *Dieu et nous* [English trans. 1957], 92).

<sup>23</sup> "By the words 'He is,' is he to be understood," *Katha* II.6.13 (see Śāṅkara, *BSB* III.2.21). Śāṅkar has a wonderful expression: "*Brahman* is known as *Bhūman*" (*bhūman* = completeness, fullness of being), *KenUB* II.1.

simply, "I am." He is absolute reality and absolute truth.<sup>24</sup> It does not mean we are denying the immanence of God when we speak of the Absolute as He (in the third person), neither are we minimizing his transcendence by calling him 'I'.<sup>25</sup> He is the Absolute.<sup>26</sup> God is I.<sup>27</sup> I is His name.<sup>28</sup> He is, properly speaking, the only I.<sup>29</sup>

God is Truth in a twofold sense. He is truth inasmuch as he is the divine Subject in the divine expression *I am* and he is also the truth reflected in the multiform appearance of this world of becoming.<sup>30</sup> God is the truth of truth.<sup>31</sup> The Christian Trinity has also been defined as "the True, the Truth, and the Spirit of Truth."<sup>32</sup>

### Divine Logos

"S is P" is true as long as 'P is S'; in other words, if there is identity between the Subject and the Predicate, while the one remains subject and the other predicate, P does not need to become S in order to be true, but it must become the *real* and true predicate of the subject.

God is the only absolute Subject and, therefore, the only absolute Truth. Things are true (which is the same as saying they *are*) only if they are objects of this Subject, if they are

<sup>24</sup> See P. S. Ramanathan, "God Is Truth," *Indian Philosophical Congress* 26 (Poona, 1951), 79–83.

<sup>25</sup> See the immortal expression in *BG* IX.4–5: "All of the universes are pervaded by me through my unmanifested form. All beings dwell (rest, lie) in me, but I do not live in them. And neither do beings live in Me. Behold my divine mystery (*yoga*)! My Spirit (Being, *ātman*) which gives life to and sustains (creates) beings, yet dwells not within them." An exegesis of this text, in which are declared both immanence and transcendence, the total dependence of things and the absolute independence of God, would demand a completely separate study.

<sup>26</sup> See the Sanskrit *aham*—'I', from the root *as*: being. The Self is being.

<sup>27</sup> See the immortal opening lines of *BUI* 4.1: "In the beginning this was Self (the *ātman*) alone in the shape of a person. Looking around him he saw nothing but himself. He first said, 'This is I'; thus he became 'I' by name. Therefore even now, when a man is called, he first says, 'This is I,' and then pronounces the other name which he may have" (see S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanisads* [London, 1953], 163).

<sup>28</sup> The Old Testament could be abridged by saying that it is the preparation for the true knowledge of the name of God (see Is 52:6; Jer 16:21). Jahweh has always kept this religious thirst alive—the task of the "Servant of Jahweh" is to declare His name to men (see Ps 21:23).

<sup>29</sup> The mission of Christ on the earth was to make known the name of God (see Jn 17:3; 6:26). This ἐγνώστα, this "making known" (v. 26), however, is a ἐφανέρωσις—a manifestation, an epiphany (v. 6)—of Christ as His Son. "You know that ἐγώ εἰμι—I am he" (Jn 8:24) is an echo of Is 43:10 (see Jn 8:28). This ἐγώ εἰμι—I am he—brings with it the solidarity [I would almost say the substitution, *AN*] of Christ with God" (C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge, 1954], 96). On the importance of the ὄνομα θεοῦ—the name of God—as the source of a certain kind of power over people on the part of the Godhead, see, with reference to magic, A. J. Festugière, *L'idéal religieux des Grecs et l'Evangile* (Paris, 1932), Excursus E: *La valeur religieuse des papyrus magiques*, 285–89.

<sup>30</sup> "Ego, das Wort Ich, ist niemandem eigen als Gott allein in seiner Einheit" ['Ego,' namely the word 'I,' is proper to no one else than to God alone in his oneness], writes Meister Eckhart, *Deutsche Predigten* (München: Quint, 1955), 302.

<sup>31</sup> And it is perhaps on this truth that the gods meditated, according to *BUV* 5.1: *Tē devān satyam evopāsate*. See the perspicacity of the following passages and their curious interpretation by Śākara (*in h. l.*).

<sup>32</sup> *Satyasya satyam*—the Real of the Real, the Truth of Truth—*BU* II.I.20. "The expression *ḥāqīqā al-ḥāqq* is a classic among sūfis. It translates literally as 'the reality of the real' or 'the truth of the true' (ontological), i.e. the only Real, God" (G. C. Anawati and L. Gardet, *Mistica Islamica* [Turin: S.E.I., 1960], 293).

<sup>33</sup> ἀληθινός, καὶ ἀληθεία, καὶ πνεύμα τῆς ἀληθείας—Gregor. Nazian., *Oration* 23.2 (PG 35.1164).

not *subjects* in themselves.<sup>33</sup> They do not bring themselves into existence and they cannot give themselves their being (*subjects*).<sup>34</sup> For the very fact that they are *objects* (*ob-jecta*) of God, they become *subjects* (*sub-jектa*) only in relation to the objects they produce (that they ob-ject, throw, place before themselves).<sup>35</sup>

It is not our concern right now, however, to analyze the nature of this dependence. Our problem is only this: things are real inasmuch as they *are* and, since they are, they are able to fulfill the peculiar being they have received, and they have received their being for the very fact that they are ideas, parts, participations, expressions, creations, emanations, predicates of God.<sup>36</sup> Each metaphysical school may then choose from these the word it considers most fitting for expressing its conception.<sup>37</sup>

From a phenomenological point of view, therefore, we may distinguish the truth of the object when it corresponds to the subject—logical truth—and the truth of the subject—ontological truth—when it is the ‘object’ of the absolute Subject. A completely different problem, meanwhile, regards the character of *objectivity* of the subject.

‘This is a rope’ is not *ultimately* true at the time that I say it and in the sense in which I express it, but it receives its truth if it is God who says “this is a rope”—since the fact that his declaring *this* to be a rope is what causes the ‘*this*’ to be a rope and, obviously, creates the ‘*this*’ that is a rope. On the other hand, when we ourselves say “this is a rope” we are not creating the ‘*this*’ or causing ‘*this*’ to be a rope. We merely discover that ‘there is a rope’ and our statement is true, just as we would be mistaken if we were to declare “this is a snake.” And it is here that we can see the difference. Our inner and private *logos* corresponds to the sphere of our inner and private truth. It does not create truth but merely discovers it. ‘This is a snake’ is also true if by ‘*this*’ we mean that which, in our fearful and dark imagination, we imagine or see during a walk at twilight. Only if we were able to create the subject could we also create its truth at the same time. This is precisely the temptation into which the doctrine of absolute Idealism has fallen; and yet, from the point of view of the absolute self, Idealism cannot be called false, since truth is certainly the product of an intelligence.<sup>38</sup> The divine

<sup>33</sup> See the Scholastic concept: “non sunt suum esse, sed sunt esse habentes” [They are not their *being*, but they are in that they have being] (referring to the angels, as absolutely perfect creatures); or, more generally, “nulla creatura est suum esse sed haber esse participatum” [No creature *is* its being, but has participated being] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q.12, a.4).

<sup>34</sup> “Universas creaturas et spirituales et corporales, non quia sunt ideo novit: sed ideo sunt quia novit. . . Quia ergo scivit creavit, quia creavit scivit” [(He) does not know all His creatures, both spiritual and corporeal, because they (already) are, but they *are* (only) because He knows them. . . therefore, because He knew them He created them (and) because He created them he knew them] (St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15.13, *et paulo post*: “Nosse enim et esse ibi (scil. in Trinitate) unum est” [There knowing and being (in the Trinity) are one and the same thing] [loc. cit. 15.14 [PL 42.1076]]). See also, 6.10, and 11; *Confessions*, 13.2, etc.

<sup>35</sup> The Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* has its ontological and also phenomenological roots in *cogitor ergo sum* [I am thought, therefore I am]. See H. U. v. Balthasar, *Wahrheit*, op. cit., 46.

<sup>36</sup> “Deus est ens, per essentiam, et alia per participationem” [God is being, by essence, and all else by participation] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.4, a.3, ad 3).

<sup>37</sup> As we know, at least once Thomas uses the word *emanatio* (see *Sum. theol.*, I, q.45) to show that what is truly important is the conception that lies behind words.

<sup>38</sup> See the voice of Christian tradition: “Scientia Dei est mensura rerum, non quantitativa, qua quidem mensura carent infinita, sed quia mensurat essentiam et veritatem rei. Unumquodque enim in tantum habet de veritate sua naturae [essentiae], in quantum imitatur Dei scientiam, sicut artificiatum in quantum concordat arti [causae exemplari]” [The knowledge of God is the measure of things, not

Self, however, is greater than *λόγος* (*Logos*, intellect), because it is also *πνεῦμα* (Spirit). On the other hand, we can say 'this' only to the subject that is in our thought and our imagination, and not to ourselves or to reality.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, Truth is the product of a *Logos*—and yet our *logos* can only express the truth of the object and is powerless in the face of any subject. In addition to this, we discover the object and, along with it, its truth, since in some way the object has already been established as a subject by the divine *Logos*, in that it has already been 'thought' by God.<sup>40</sup> Contrariwise, the divine *Logos*, by 'thinking' produces (creates) its objects in such a way as to make them subjects. Things are, in fact, what the *Logos*, the absolute intellect, 'thinks' of them,<sup>41</sup> which gives them intelligibility<sup>42</sup> and being.<sup>43</sup> In a special and particular sense (the clarification of which we shall leave to the open discussion of metaphysics) we are 'thoughts', 'predicates', 'objects', 'things', 'creatures'—through, from, and within the Absolute.

"You are that."<sup>44</sup> I have made you "what you are."<sup>45</sup> Yet my *ego* cannot say, "I am you." It is true, however, that the absolute Self tells me "(I am) that," "(I am) you," otherwise my *that*, my *ego*, His *you*, would not exist at all. The whole mystery of this earthly existence of ours is that He,

quantitatively, for the infinite is not subject to this kind of measure; but it is the measure of the essence and truth of things. For everything has truth of nature according to the degree in which it imitates the knowledge of God, as the thing made by art agrees with the art] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q.14, a.12, ad 3). We must not forget, however, that "Scientia Dei aliter comparatur ad res quam scientia nostra; comparatur enim ad eas sicut causa [efficiens] et mensura" [God's knowledge has not the same relation to things as ours has: since it is related to them as their cause and measure]. Thomas Aquinas, *De pot.*, q.7, a.10, ad 5.

<sup>39</sup> See the language of Christian spirituality: "For me to be a saint means to be myself. Therefore the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am and discovering my true self" (Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* [London: Hollis & Carter, 1949], 26).

<sup>40</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, "Unaquaque res dicitur vera absolute, secundum intellectum a quo dependet. . . . Et similiter res naturales dicuntur esse verae, secundum quod assequuntur similitudinem specium quae sunt in mente divina" [Everything is said to be true absolutely, insofar as it is related to the intellect on which it depends. . . . In the same way, natural things are said to be true insofar as they express the likeness of the species that are in the divine mind] (*Sum. Theol.*, I, q.16, a.1).

<sup>41</sup> "R. d. q. quodammodo una est veritas, qua omnia sunt vera, et quomodo non. . . . Et sic, licet plures sint essentiae vel formae rerum, tamen una est veritas divini intellectus, secundum quam omnes res denominantur verae" (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q.16, a.6. [I answer that, in one sense truth, whereby all things are true, is one, and in another sense it is not. . . . And thus, although the essences or forms of things are many, yet the truth of the divine intellect is one, in conformity to which all things are said to be true]).

<sup>42</sup> "Id quod facit nobis intelligibilia actu per modum luminis participati, est aliquid animae, et multiplicatur secundum multitudinem animarum et hominum. Illud vero quod facit intelligibilia per modum solis illuminantis, est unum separatum, quod est Deum" (Thomas Aquinas, *De spiritualibus creaturis* a.10, c. [Thus, then, that which makes things actually intelligible in us after the manner of a participated light is a part of the soul, and is multiplied along with the number of souls and of men. But that which makes things intelligible after the manner of the sun, which illuminates, is something that is one and separate, which is God]. See *BG XIII.17*.

<sup>43</sup> See the study by J. Pieper, *Philosophia negative* (Munich: Kösel, 1953).

<sup>44</sup> *Tat tvam asi*, the famous *mahāvākya* formula of the *CU* (VI.8.7), relates specifically to the truth. See also Śāṅkārā, *Upadeśasāhasri* I.2.7 and all of chapter II.18, which shares the same title. See especially vv. 170–73.192.193.197.

<sup>45</sup> The Knox translation of "Εἰς αὐτὸν τοῦτο ἐξῆγειρά σε"—"in hoc ipsum excitavi te" (Rom 9:17; see Ex 9:16–17).

the absolute Self, God, is saying (if we may put it so) the word '*that*', '*you*' without completing the expression "*I am that*," "*I am you*," from our *temporal* point of view. This is undoubtedly what He is expressing, but to us it appears as a future tense: "(I) will be *that*," "(I) will be *you*." When the time is fulfilled (and note that we do not say *shall be* fulfilled) we will be able to understand the whole truth about ourselves, that is, the *peculiar*—and personal—identity of His words, "I am that." My *ego* will then have understood the truth and will answer simply (my own being is merely a divine answer) "You," "You are," "You are Self," "You are I."<sup>46</sup> And my real personality—my true *ego*—is this "You," this 'you' that I am.<sup>47</sup> *That* which you truly

<sup>46</sup> This, in my opinion, is the true attaining of our personality (my *ego* is actually a *you*); it is, therefore, much more than the mere preservation of the same. And this also solves the classic problem: "How, O beloved, should he know the Knower?" (*BU IV.5.15*; see also *ibid.* III.4.2: "You cannot think that which is the thinker of thought; you cannot know that which is the knower of knowledge" (see T. M. P. Mahadevan, *The Upaniṣads in the History of Philosophy, Eastern, Western* by S. Radhakrishnan [London, 1952], 1:59). See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q.14; a.2. The knower is not known—in our final state—as object, a thing known (otherwise he would no longer be a knower and we would know the known and not the knower), but as Subject. "Videntem video," as St. Augustine says ("visio Dei viventis et videntis" [We see the one who sees us], *Serm. 10, de Verbis Domini* [Brev. Rom. de Comm. Abbat.]). This is only possible if one knows *together* with the knower, if one is part of Him and contemplates *with* Him. See the voice of Christian tradition: "Man muss wissen, dass Gott zu erkennen und von Gott erkannt zu werden, Gott zu sehen und von Gott gesehen zu werden der Sache nach eins ist. Indem wir Gott erkennen und sehen, erkennen und sehen wir, dass er uns sehen und erkennen macht das er uns macht bekennende und sehende" [You must know that this is, in reality, one and the same thing—to know God and to be known by God, to see God and to be seen by God. In knowing and seeing God, we know and see that He makes us know and see] (Eckhart, *Deutsche Predigten*, Predigt 35, op. cit., 317). See also the gnoseology of St. Augustine. See F. Körner, "Deus in homine videt (Das Subiect des menschlichen Erkennens nach der Lehre Augustins)," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 64 (1956): 166–217 (Munich). See a possible interpretation in the sense of *BG XIII.2*. Śāṅkārā says, "*Avidyā* is not a quality (*dharmā*) of the knower" (*Gītā-Bhāṣyā b. I.*). "Et in lumine tuo videbimus lumen" (Ps. 35.10) ("and in your light shall we see the Light"); this, in fact, is how the entire Christian tradition has interpreted this text (see also Rev 22:4–5; Is 9:19). But then, one asks, what does the knower know? Or, what do we know if we know together with Him? *One* can only know oneself, but, since he is then an object, he ceases to be the knower and becomes the known. To state this, however, is both exact and inexact at the same time. The answer to this question can be found in a contemplation of the Trinity, the founding Mystery of Christianity. We will become *one* with the Son, who is the *Logos*, the Intellect, the Knower (see Jn 14:9: "Qui videt me videt et Patrem" [He that has seen me has seen the Father], a passage that can be likened to Jn 17:23: "Ego in eis et tu in me" [I in them, and you in me]; see also 14:20). See also the doctrine of Nicolas Cusanus.

<sup>47</sup> See the initial question of *MandU I.I.3*: "Sir, what is that through which, if it is known, everything else becomes known?" and the answer by Johannes Scotus Eriugena: "beatiſe vision . . . will not be the seeing of a light but, rather, the being engulfed in light" (see E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* [London, 1955], 136). See, above all, the Holy Scripture: "tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum" (1 Cor 13:12 [then shall I know even as also I am known]). My knowledge will not be a separate knowledge or a knowledge of objects, but I will know first of all because I am known (ἐπερώθην) and, therefore, being the 'known' of the 'Knower', I will know and be together with Him. See also Gal 4:9. The path of knowledge—not that which leads to the knowledge of things, but that which leads to being known and hence to becoming knowledge—is a path of Love: "Si quis autem diligit Deum, hic cognitus est (ἐγνωσταί) ab eo" (1 Cor 8:3 [But if any man love God, the same is known of him]). This might be termed as the leitmotif of the Gospel of John, though we cannot dwell further on the idea here, since we must keep to our main theme. Regarding the question of Muṇḍaka, see Śāṅkārā, *BSB I.1.4*. Neither the Brahman of the Vedānta nor the Christian God (strictly speaking) might be

*are* is a 'you': "That you are."<sup>48</sup> We are one—"and that is three."<sup>49</sup>

This, properly speaking, is *Logos*, the *You* of the Father<sup>50</sup>—and this, ultimately, is what

called an *object* of vision and knowledge. "Videre et videri unum sunt" [seeing and being seen are one and the same thing], writes Eckhart (*Expositio s. Evang. sec. Iohann.* I.12, no. 107), summing up an idea by St. Augustine (see *de Trinitate* 9.12, no. 18; PL 42.970).

<sup>48</sup> This, at least, is my version of the Upaniṣadic Mahāvākyā mentioned earlier. We have, therefore, a text that could offer us a profound point of contact between Hinduism and Christianity. Both recognize the supreme identity. The Hindu version might be as follows: *You are that*, meaning: you, your real *you*, is not the body, the soul or consciousness of the ego, but You are *that*, i.e., Brahman. What the Upaniṣadic prophet is exemplifying to the disciple is, in fact, ontological tautology: recognize *your* identity with the one Ātman, because only the Ātman *is*, and what you *are* can only be the *is* that is the Ātman. *You are that* because there is only one *You* and it is *that*, i.e., *Brahman*.

The Christian interpretation might be expressed as follows: not only is there an ultimate *You*, which is the Absolute, i.e., God, but there is something more: what you really are is a *You*. *That is you*. Ultimately, this means that in the eternal order of things we are all one in Christ (1 Cor 15:28; Col 3:2; Gal 3:28; this oneness begins with baptism: 1 Cor 12:13). "That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us.... And the glory (*δόξα*, power) that you gave me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (Jn 17:21–23). The meaning of the temporal process is the reconciliation, recapitulation, summing up, unifying of all creation through Christ, with Christ and in Christ (Col 1:20; Eph 1:10; 1 Jn 2:2; Col 1:15–17). In the eternal order we are one with Christ and He is the eternal *You* of the Father. We are the *you* of God. The Trinitarian tension of identity and diversity also applies to the ultimate problem of the reality of creation. Our head tells us (or so we interpret it) that we are the *you* of the I, that *we are* inasmuch as we are thus expressed by the I and we are called to recognize this *You*-identity of ours. What we are saying here is more than mere tautology. It is the revelation of the Mystery that has been hidden since eternity in God and revealed in Christ and by Christ (Eph 1:9; 1 Cor 2:7ff., etc.). We shall develop this thought, however, at another time.

<sup>49</sup> Identity cannot be given without diversity, and vice versa. The key to understanding what we have stated can be found in the Trinity. The Vedāntic tradition, and Indic wisdom on the whole, has placed greater emphasis on identity, while so-called Western philosophy has mainly given importance to diversity. The Trinity offers us a perfectly balanced answer: we are one with God because we are one with Christ and Christ is one with the Father. We will never be the I but, rather, the *You* of the I. Yet this *You*, as distinct as it is—in that it is *you*—is none other than the *You*, the consciousness, the image of the I; it is the I as You, if we understand it correctly. To reestablish the spiritual atmosphere in which we have thus far been moving, let us cite the following Thomistic texts: "Quidquid est in Deo, Deus est" [Whatever is in God is God] (De pot. q.3, a.16, ad 24); "Creatura, sibi autem relicta, in se considerata nihil est: unde prius naturaliter inest sibi nihil quam esse" [A creature does not have being, however, except from another, for, considered in itself, every creature is nothing, and thus, with respect to the creature, non-being is prior to being by nature] (De pot. q.5, a.1, c); and "Illud quod habet esse ab alio, in se consideratum, est non ens" [That which has not being save from another, considered in itself is not] (De pot. q.3, a.13, ad 4).

The eleventh-century Sūfi mystic Abul'-Qāsim-Al Qushayrī, for example, expresses himself thus: "Union, he who unites, he who is united," Risāla (Cairo: Ansārī, 1948), 136. Or, to quote another Muslim mystic, "I looked and saw that Lover, Love, and beloved were all one, for in the world of union all must be One" (Abū Yazid [*apud* R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957], 196]). Zaehner suggests that this attribution to Abū Yazid may not be correct. The same identification between Knowledge, the Knower, and the Known can also be found in Jewish mysticism. See, for example, G. C. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1955), 141 (quoted by Zaehner, loc. cit.).

<sup>50</sup> See Ps 2:7 and its entire development in the Christian Holy Scriptures and tradition.

we are: a part of *Logos*. The Truth is *Logos*,<sup>51</sup> since *Logos* is the true light of Being.<sup>52</sup> In *Logos* God and the world in some way meet.<sup>53</sup>

The truth is the revelation of Being;<sup>54</sup> it is the Light that shines in the darkness.<sup>55</sup> All truth, from whatever source it appears, ultimately derives from the Divine Spirit.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> We cannot develop here this idea relating to a Christocentric conception of reality. See, for example, the philosophical-theological works of H. U. v. Balthasar, K. Rahner, E. Masch, and also J. Danielou, M. Schumas, R. Guardini, *sed ne non, altero sensu* K. Barth, N. Berdyaev, S. Bulgakov, etc., as well as the traditional writings of the church fathers and certain of the Scholastics.

<sup>52</sup> "Yet it is not any sort of word," observes Thomas Aquinas, "but one who breathes forth Love." Thus St. Augustine says (*De Trinit. 9.10*), "The word which we seek to disclose is knowledge with love" [*Verbum quod insinuare intendimus, cum amore notitia est, apud Sum. Theol. I. q.43, a.5, ad 2* (for St. Augustine, see PL 42.969)].

<sup>53</sup> See τὸ φῶ τὸ ἀληθινόν (Jn 1:9), "Lux vera," "true light"; . . . ἡ ἀληθεία διά 'Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο (Jn 1:17), "veritas per Jesum Christum facta est," "truth was made [came] by Jesus Christ." All this concerns the Logos (see also Jn 14:6; also "satyam brahma sanātanam" [Mahābh., Śānti-Parva 162.5]; "Truth is the eternal Brahma"—that is, the eternal divine expression (*brahma* seems to be the root of *brahm* = to speak, bloom, spurt, breathe; it is also believed to mean 'sacred expression', divine Logos). I do not consider myself sufficiently qualified, however, to take part in this philosophical discussion on the etymology of the word *brahma*; see J. Gonda, *Notes on Brahman* (Utrecht, 1950); P. Thieme, *Z.D.M.G.* 112 (1952): 91–129; L. Renou, *J. A.* 237 (1949); H. Zimmer, *Philosophies of India* (New York, 1956), 74–78; T. M. P. Mahadevan, *The Upanisads*, in S. Radhakrishnan, *History of Philosophy, Eastern, Western*, op. cit., I:60. See St. Augustine: "In nomine Verbi significatur non solum respectus ad Patrem, sed etiam ad illa quae per Verbum facta sunt operativa potentia" [the name Word signifies not only relation to the Father, but also relation to those beings which are made through the Word, by His operative power] (*Quaestiones*, book 83, quaest. 63; *apud* the important article by Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q.34, a.3).

<sup>54</sup> "Verum est manifestativum et declarativum esse" [Truth is that which declares or manifests being], says St. Hilary, quoted by Thomas Aquinas in *De Veritate*, I.I. J. Pieper, *Traktat über die Klugheit* (Cologne: Hegner), on 51 translates this as "Wahrheit . . . bedeutet gerade die 'Offenbarkeit des Seins'" [Truth . . . means precisely the "revelation of being"].

<sup>55</sup> As important sources for a comparative study on the metaphysics of light see *SU III.6* and 8; *IsUV*; *MundU XIII.1.7*; *BU IV.4.16* (and the comments = bhāṣya in h. l. by Śāṅkārā); *CU II.13.7*; *BG V.16*; X.41; XIII.17; XIV.17, etc., *sed ne non* Augustine, *Serm. 67. c.5, n.8.9* (PL 38.437); *Contra Secundinum Maniūbicum*, c. 26 (PL 42.602); Johan. Scott. Eriugena, *Homilia in Prol. Ev. Ioh.* (PL 122.290) *apud* D. Thoma, *Expos. canto S. Ioh.*, C. 15 (393 a), and, though it is partly altered, in *De Ventate*, q.8, a.7, ad 2; Bonav., *Sent.*, I, d.3, p.l. a. unic. q.2, obi.2; II, d.3, p.l. q.2, ad 5; d.4, a.4, a.), q.2, etc. See also "Lux in tenebris lucet." Res enim omnia creata sapit umbram nihil" [ "The light shines in the darkness.' For the shadow of nothingness can be sensed in all of creation") (Eckhart, *Expos. in Ev. sec. Joan. 1.1–5*, no. 20); "Lux deus, et omne quod divinum et perfectio est. Tenebrae omne quod creatum est" [The light is God, and everything that is divine and perfect. Darkness is everything that is created], ibid. no. 72. "Omnis substantia influens in aliam est lux in essentia vel naturam lucis habens" [Every substance that flows into another is light in essence or has the nature of light] (*De intelligentiis VII.1 [8.21, apud Eckhart, op. cit.]*).

<sup>56</sup> See the continuity of the Christian tradition: "Quia super illud 1 Cor 13:[3] 'nemo potest dicere, Dominus Jesus, nisi in Spiritu Sancto' dicit glossa Ambrosii [For, in his gloss on 1 Corinthians 12:3, "No man can say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," Ambrose says] (see *Glossa Lombardi* [PL 191.1651A]; *Glossa Ordino* [PL 114.540B]; *Ambrosiaster* in b. l. [PL 17.245B]). "Omne verum, a quocumque dicatur, a Spiritu Sancto est" [Every truth, by whomsoever spoken, is from the Holy Ghost] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I.2, q.109, a.1, in 1 (see also ad 1). See also in 1 Cor. 12, lect. 1; in *Joan.* 8, lect. 6. There is a kernel of truth in every point of view: Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, II.2.

## 2

# THE DESCENDING PATH

### Human Truth Is Relative

During our pilgrimage on the earth, through our being-in-time and our being-time, we are nothing but a temporal node and hope to become, to reach the end of time and there, finally, *to be*. Meanwhile, as long as this time interval lasts, even though we cannot attain absolute truth we must not stop trying. We will have to reveal to our knowledge the true nature of being<sup>1</sup> and in order to do this we must seek to discover our own specifically temporal human truth,<sup>2</sup> which is relative in its dual dimension, that is, (a) *existentially* and (b) *essentially*.

'S is P' is the expression of truth, but we are not the absolute Subject, nor can we create any real subject; the identification needed to express the whole truth of S, therefore, so that it can be the primary S, is beyond the power of our being, because it is beyond being itself. We are, in fact, merely a predicate, an object of God, a word of God, but we are also—at the same time and in the same act—both the 'object' of his Logos, and the object of his Love. And it is precisely this second dimension of our being in relation to the Trinity that prevents us from falling prey to pure intellectualism, even of the noblest type.

### *Existentially*

Human truth has a character that is completely the opposite of the divine absolute-truth.<sup>3</sup> My true being, in fact, will not consist in being a Subject—as It, the Self, is—but in being a Predicate (Its Predicate).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the concept of revealing *avadhbāraṇa* in the BSB I.I by Śāṅkārā.

<sup>2</sup> "Nunc filii Dei sumus, et nondum apparuit quid erimus," "οῦπω ἐφανερώθη τι ἔσθμεθα," 1 Jn 3:2 [Now are we the sons of God and it is not yet manifest (revealed, fulfilled) what we shall be].

<sup>3</sup> "Nos itaque ista quae fecisti videmus quia sunt Tu autem quia vides ea, sunt" [We therefore see these things which you have made, because they are: but they are, because you see them] (Augustine, *Confessions*, 13.38).

<sup>4</sup> See St. Paul's lively and profound expression when he speaks of the giver of life (*Jacopone*), God: "καλούντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα" [God who quickens the dead and calls those things which are not as though they were] (Rom 4:17). See Augustine, *Sermo* 158.3 (PL 38.864) and *Sermo* 26.5 (PL 38.173ff.). We are simply a non-being called to resemble a being. This *calling* and this *resemblance* are constitutive of our existence. See in the Old Testament: "Tibi serviat omnis creatura tua: quia dixisti et facta sunt. Misisti Spiritum tuum et creata sunt, et non est qui resistat Voci tuae" [Let all your creatures serve you: because you have spoken, and they were made: you sent forth your spirit, and they were created, and there is no one that can resist your voice] (Judith 16:17; see Esther 13:9).

Needless to say, we are referring here not to a *logical* but to an ontological predicate, though in using the term *ontological* we do not forget its ontic degradation with regard to its identity with the Ultimate Subject. The more I am P, the more 'S is P' will be true; the closer I come to S, the more I truly fulfill myself. The truth of my being will grow in the same measure as my being approaches its destination—fullness of being. The truth of my being depends on my loyalty to Being, on obedience to my being. The truth must be sought,<sup>5</sup> weighed,<sup>6</sup> 'made'.<sup>7</sup> We must believe in the Truth.<sup>8</sup> Truth does not live primarily in my intellect, but in my being.<sup>9</sup>

This ontological character of truth produces an extremely important consequence: only if man is truth can he attain truth.<sup>10</sup> A simple theoretical and intellectual understanding

<sup>5</sup> See the Greek expression ή ζητησις τῆς ἀλήθειας [the investigation of truth] (Thucydides I.20); for Aristotle see *Phys.* I.8 (191a24): "ζητοῦντες γάρ . . . τὴν ἀλήθειαν θείαν καὶ τὴν τῶν ἐντων" [They (the first philosophers) sought the truth and the nature of beings]. See R. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza*, op. cit., 95, 129.

<sup>6</sup> See the pre-Socratic expression "κρίνειν τὰλθής" (*Anaxag.*, fragm. 21 [*apud Diels, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, I.409.14]); and also Jn 8:16. "ἡ κρίσις ἡ ἐμὴ ἀλήθην ἔστιν" [my judgment (separation, selection) is true]. See also νερίναι λογώ in *Parmenides*, fragm. 7.5.

<sup>7</sup> "Ποιεῖν ἀληθείαν" [to create, make the truth] is a frequently recurring expression in the Old Testament. See Gen 32:10; 47:29; Esdras 19:33; and also Tob 4:6; 13:6. Dodd (op. cit., 174) translates this as "to practice the truth," with the meaning of "acting honorably," but the original text and translation should be understood as expressions of the existential and personal dimension of truth. I wonder whether an American translation might not translate it as "be faithful to yourself"!

<sup>8</sup> "Πιστὸς ἀληθῆς" (*Parmenid.*, fragm. I.30/9.28 [*apud Diels*, I.159.9, and 156.14]). *Πιστά* eventually comes to mean ἀληθῆ λέγειν ("to speak faithfully" means to speak truly, to say the truth). See Herodot. I.182; II.73 (*apud* Bultmann art. *ἀλήθεια* in *Theologisches Wörterbuch des Neuen Testaments*). Faith is effectively the human organ of truth. See *Khāndogya Up.*, VII.19: "Verily, when one believes, then one perceives. One who does not believe, does not perceive. Only he who believes, perceives. One must, however, desire to understand faith" (according to both the version of S. Ranahsiushnan and that of R. H. Hume). The German translation gives a closer grammatical connection: "Wenn man glaubt—Āraddhadhāti—denn denkt man, Der Nichtglaubende denkt nicht. Nur der Glaubende denkt, Den Glauben also muss man zu erkennen wünschen—vijjjñāsitavyeti" [If one believes—Āraddhadhāti—then one thinks, the unbeliever does not think. Only the believer thinks, so therefore one must wish to recognize faith—vijjjñāsitavyeti]. See also the extraordinary sentence in *KathU* I.17: "as soon as the gifts were taken away, faith entered into him (Nachiketas), who was still a boy, and he thought. . ." From this text we understand that (a) faith is considered a gift; (b) it is closely connected with sacrifice; (c) to receive it one does not need to have the mature mind of an adult; (d) faith is the starting point for higher thought. On Āraddhā, see also *Bṛhadāraṇ. Up.* VI.1.2.9; *Khāndog. Up.* V.4.2, etc. For *Πιστός*, see the article by Bultmann in Kittel's *T.W.N.T.* and also R. Aubert, *Le problème de l'acte de foi* (Louvain, 1945), etc.

<sup>9</sup> The Sanskrit expression 'tattvam, tattvam' illustrates the existential and supra-intellectual connotations of truth in a different way from the Greek concept 'ἀληθεία'. *Tattvam* is the state of being 'that'; it is reality itself in its very being; *ἀληθεία*, on the other hand, suggests the uncovering or disclosing of the truth, hidden, forgotten ('λήθη'), inside a thing. However, see also the truth that shrouds the Absolute in *BU* I.6.3: "This is the immortal, covered by the truth (the real, *satyena*). Verily breath is the immortal (*amṛtam*)."<sup>11</sup> For the somewhat dialectical relationship that exists between truth and immortality, see the comment by Śāṅkārā on *BU* V.5.1: "Name and form are the truth (the real, *satyam*); from these this breath—*prāṇas*—is shrouded (covered)." See also II.5.18.

<sup>10</sup> See the expression "paramam brahma-veda brāhmaṇa bhavati" [Those who know the supreme Brahman (Truth) become Brahman (Truth)] (*MundU* III.2.9). This text, along with others (*SB* X.5.2.20; *BU* I.4.7; and Śāṅkara; *ibid.*, I.4.5, etc.), would help us to develop a metaphysical conception of prayer (or, more accurately, of contemplation) if it were close to the Christian conception. "For

is just not possible.<sup>11</sup> Our intellect, in fact, can only understand that which belongs to its own sphere, that is, the logical or essential aspect of truth, but not its existential or ontological core. The truth, therefore, is not something that we possess but, rather, something that possesses us, something we are possessed by,<sup>12</sup> in which we discover our true being. I do not reach the truth, in fact, through the *knowledge* of the manifold, but only through practicing the *wisdom* that is the experience of the One,<sup>13</sup> and while I do not despise knowledge, I consider it merely a useful means to reaching my goal.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, this wisdom is a gift of God and is, strictly speaking, the consciousness of being known, rather than the consciousness of knowing.<sup>15</sup>

But our existential access to truth is endless on this earth, which explains why no one in this world is able to possess the whole truth or to be *fully* possessed by it. The way to truth, moreover, implies a drawing closer, which takes place within us and involves our whole being; in order to achieve it, in fact, goodwill and a pure heart<sup>16</sup> are as essential as superior intelligence<sup>17</sup> and a right line of thought. The "πρώτων ψέυδος," the main error of

the understanding of the truth is given to those who have become partakers of the truth," writes St. Gregory of Sinai, *Texts on Commandments and Dogmas. Philokalia*, transl. into English from Russian (London: Faber & Faber, 1951), 42. It is also interesting to note that Gregory refers, immediately after, to 1 Cor 2:14: "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit."

<sup>11</sup> "Brahman must be known by becoming Brahman ourselves," T. M. P. Mahadevan, *The Upanisads (History of Philosophy Eastern, Western)*—ed. S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., 1:71). See St. Augustine, "Notunt fideles corpus Christi si corpus Christi esse non negligant: fiant corpus Christi si volunt vivere de Spiritu Christi: de Spiritu Christi non vivit nisi corpus Christi" (Tract. 26, in Joan). [The faithful shall know the body of Christ if they do not forget that they are the body of Christ. They must become the body of Christ if they wish to live in the Spirit of Christ, for only the body of Christ lives in the Spirit of Christ.] See also Jn 3:19–21; 18:37.

<sup>12</sup> R. Panikkar, *F. H. Jacobi y la Filosofía del sentimiento* (Buenos Aires, 1948), 8ff. See Thomas Aquinas, who upheld that metaphysical "truth does not belong to man as something he possesses, but as something that has been granted to him on loan" ["non competit homini ut possessio sed sicut aliquid mutuatum"], in *I Metaphys.* 3 (no. 64). Likewise, S. Kierkegaard states that God cannot be an object for man, since He is the Subject. See the English version of A. Dru, *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard* (London, 1938), no. 620, or the accurate Italian version by C. Fabro, *Diario* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1962). We come across the same spirit in India: "Saṅkara and, along with him, the entire Indic tradition, insists on these subjective factors because . . . truth is not like possessing an object; it is a personal matter, it is the realization of the innermost Self and demands, therefore, the conversion not only of man's erroneous notions, but also of the deepest attitudes he holds toward himself and toward the world" (R. V. De Smet, *The Theological Method of Saṅkara* (Rome: Pont. Univ. Gregor. pro manuscript, 1953), 120, *segno* 121. See the Christian idea of conversion—the μετάνοια, or transformation, of νοῦς and γνῶση (spirit and intellect), which is necessary in receiving the Christian message; see Mt 3:2; Mk 1:15, etc.

<sup>13</sup> See Lk 10:42.

<sup>14</sup> *Jñānam vijñāsahitam*—says BG IX.1. "Knowledge together with experience, wisdom combined with fulfilment, personal experience: this is the hidden secret that leads to liberation from evil." See also BG III.41 (*jñānavijñāna*) and VI.8 (see the very fine expression *jñānavijñānātrptatmā* [one {the yogi} whose spirit is satisfied by *jñāna* and *vijñāna*]).

<sup>15</sup> See 1 Cor 8:2–3; Gal 4:9; 6:3. An exegesis of these texts would take us too far afield. See only the tension and polarity of ἐπιγνώσουμαι and ἐπεγνώσθη (1 Cor 13:12) and ἀγνοούμενοι—ἐπιγνωσθέμενοι (2 Cor 6:9). We are, inasmuch as we are known (to God), as we have already had the opportunity of pointing out in the previous pages.

<sup>16</sup> See Mt 5:8—It is the pure in heart who will see (διψονται) God.

<sup>17</sup> This is a platitude of Christian theology and Indic philosophy. As one single example, see

so-called modern philosophy, was believing in the existence of a purely rational way that can lead to the truth.

Human truth is directly related to our ontological position, and this is truly *unique*—no one else can *be* in my place. At the same time, however, my uniqueness is not at all exclusiveness, since my singularity is precisely my own relationship with the Unique One (not omni-exclusive, but omni-inclusive, due to his absolute Uniqueness).

### *Essentially*

Truth, nevertheless, has an essential aspect that is properly expressed in the statement '*S* is *P*'. Here again, our truth is relative. Not only is it impossible to identify myself with the truth, in fact, but it is also impossible to identify any *real* subject with any predicate, because the subject is always an existence, while the object is an essence. The mistake—or, rather, the misconception—on the part of Western philosophy was to believe in this possibility, and since the identification is real for God only, it was then dialectically forced to postulate the human mind as divine Spirit. '*S* is *P*' can be true if *P* expresses something that is of *S*; it is not possible, however, for *P* to complete the being of *S*.<sup>18</sup>

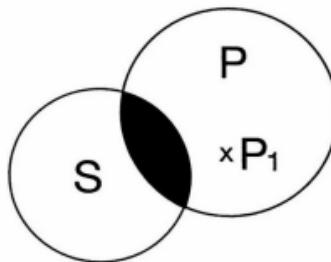
It is impossible, moreover, for both the existence of *S* and also its complete essence to be translated into *P* (at least as far as the possibilities of our mind are concerned). '*S* is *P*' is never fully equal to '*P* is *S*'. This explains how the mistake (and, in an ontological sense, the sin) is possible if we accept as true an equivalent that does not correspond to reality.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, the classic definition of logical or anthropological truth given by Western medieval philosophy—*adaequatio rei et intellectus*, the correspondence of the thing with the idea—recognizes perceptively that identity—*aequatio*—cannot be reached and introduces the

the four ascetic requirements of the disciple, the student of philosophy, established by Śaṅkara in his Commentary on the Brāhma Sūtra, I.1.1.

<sup>18</sup> "Sein (die Existenz) ist offenbar kein reales Prädikat" [Being (existence) is obviously not a real predicate], says Kant in his *Critica della ragion pura* (Leipzig: Inselausgabe, 1913), 463, addressing the famous ontological argument.

<sup>19</sup> The following figure illustrates graphically what we are saying. '*S* is *P*' is only true in the shaded area and the two circles can never coincide.



Furthermore, the pure existence of *S*, expressed by its circumference, can never be reached by *P*, which remains always a circle. My knowledge of *S* is only that indicated by the shading, but my independent knowledge of *P* may be much greater. If I think that *P*<sup>1</sup> belongs to *S*, I am mistaken, and equally so if I think that *S* is only the common area of *P*.

profoundly dynamic expression *ad-aequatio*<sup>20</sup>—*con-venentia*—a way to identity, which means that as long as we are in this world of duality<sup>21</sup> we can only reach the truth asynthetically.<sup>22</sup> The Truth must be conquered.<sup>23</sup>

### The Negative Element of Human Truth

We are able, then, to formulate 'S is P', and this is a true judgment as long as we bear in mind the limitations and the relativity of our statement. We have, in any case, a specifically human way of approaching the truth—the '*vía negationis*', the way of negation.<sup>24</sup>

To state that 'S is not Q' is, in a certain way, closer to the truth than saying 'S is P', because although the content of the statement is less potent in its ability to tell us something about S, the proposition as such does not have the limitations of the affirmative statement.

'S is P' can never be an absolute identity; 'S is not Q', however, is an absolute negation of identity. This logical absoluteness cannot be considered metaphysically; this means that 'S is not Q' states something that is logically different from the metaphysical equivalent 'S is non-Q', where we again have the simple affirmation 'S is R' (assuming that non-Q = R).<sup>25</sup>

In any subject, in fact, it is always easier to declare what it *is not*, rather than what it *is*. And as far as absolute reality is concerned, for the very fact that we are relative we are able to fathom its truth much more deeply by knowing what it *is not* rather than knowing what it *is*, because while it is true that it *is*, it *is not* in the way in which we are normally given to think that *it is*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See the concept *samviida*, the 'correspondence' or 'consistency' of Naiyayika's theory of Truth, although perhaps it does not include the dynamic aspect found in the word 'adaequatio'.

<sup>21</sup> "Regio dissimilitudinis" [zone of dissimilarity] was how St. Bernard, in the twelfth century, defined this temporal world of ours. See the excellent study by E. Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard* (London, 1940), esp. 33–59.

<sup>22</sup> This is why it will always be true that the world can only know the Absolute in nonknowledge. See the wonderful expression by Ps-Dionysius the Areopagite (S. Maximi, *Scholia in lib. de Div. Nom.*): "*Ἐν ἀγνώστῳ τὴν περὶ αὐτοῦ κτῶμεθα γνῶστον*" [In ignorance of him we acquire knowledge], *De Divinis nominibus* II (PG 4.216). And again, "*ἀγνοίᾳ γάρ γινεται γνωστὸς ὁ Θεός*," "*Ignoratione enim Deus cognoscitur*" [God is known through unknowing], ibid. See the distinction between 'ignorantia' (ignorance) and 'ignoratio' (nescience). "God is known through nescience," but it is immediately pointed out that the latter is not "eam quae ex imperitia—ἀμαθίᾳ—oritur" [that which arises from inexperience], but that 'ignorance' "qui cognosci potest"—"ἀλλὰ λαχατ' ἔκεινην τὴν ἀγνοίαν γιγνώσκεται γνωστός" [but with this ignorance we can know the knowable] (ibid., 217).

<sup>23</sup> See the text by Śaṅkara—whose comment does not really concern this point but provides us, nevertheless, with a profoundly metaphysical interpretation of the disclosure of the Truth (ἀ-λήθεια): "The super-imposition . . . learned men consider to be nescience (*Avidyā*) and the ascertainment (*avadhbāraṇa*, the disclosure) of the true nature of that which is (*vastusvarūpa*) (the Brahman-Atman), by means of its discrimination from that (the non-Self superimposed on the Self), they call knowledge (*vidya*)."*BSB* I.1 (see R. V. De Smet, *Theological Method of Śaṅkara*, op. cit., 70).

<sup>24</sup> See the famous fundamental affirmation (*mahā-vākyā*) in *BU* II.3.6: 'neti, neti'. Similarly, "Non est hoc Deus, non est hoc," exclaims St. Bonaventure, *Collatio II in Hexaemeron*, no. 32.

<sup>25</sup> We cannot analyze here the metaphysical problem of *Nothingness*. See Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q.18, a.2, ad 5: "creatura est tenebra in quantum est ex nihilo" [The creature is darkness insofar as it is from nothing]. See also ibid., q.8, a.16, ad 2, etc.

<sup>26</sup> See one of many similar expressions: *BU* II.3.6; III.9.26; St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VII.4; VIII.2; XV.22, etc.; *De Ordine*, II, n. 44; John Chrysostom (PG 48.7II–720); Gregory of Nyssa, *Hymn.*, 287 (PG 37.507); St. Basil, MG, *De Spiritu Sancto* XVIII.44 (PG 32.148ff.), etc.

It is known as unknown.<sup>27</sup> It is a hidden God.<sup>28</sup> And it is not only human truth, but truth itself that has a certain negative character.<sup>29</sup>

2. On the other hand, from a metaphysical point of view logical negation can only have a positive, that is, affirmative, character. Pure negation does not exist even in the ideal realm; it is, in fact, entirely unthinkable, since it always implies the existence of something negatable (in which case it would not be pure negation), and if it were negation of nothing, either it would be completely senseless or it would be the most affirmative of statements. Negation is always negation of something, and this something is positive. Being cannot negate itself. Negative theology says that God is neither *this* nor *that*; by 'this' and 'that', however, we mean—and we can only mean—the world and the order of our limited concepts.<sup>30</sup> God is not this that we see, or that which we think; yet both 'this' and 'that' are positions that may prompt our negation and our affirmation to state that He is beyond.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, cataphatic theology contains both affirmation and negation, and is, obviously, much more than a '*via remotionis*'—it is a way to remove obstacles from our mind.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, the fact that we cannot positively know transcendence is not an imperfection but, rather, manifests the perfection both of our cognitive power and of the Transcendent.

This is why one of the best affirmations of the Absolute is to affirm that it is *sadasat*, being (and) non-being.<sup>33</sup> God, the Absolute, is simply A and non-A and is not A and non-A, not

<sup>27</sup> "Cognoscitur tamquam ignotus," Thomas Aquinas, *In Boet, De Trinitate*, proem., q.I, a.3, ad I. See also q.I, a.2. God does not grant vision of himself except by denying it (as to Moses), says St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Moysis*.

<sup>28</sup> See Is 45:15. See the world as the self-concealment of God (*tirodhāna*). See S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, 3rd ed. (London, 1953), 41 (see BG X.II); the excellent dialogue by Nicolas Cusanus, *De Deo abscondito*; R. Panikkar, "De Deo abscondito," *Arbor* 25 (1948) (Madrid). For a good part of the Greek tradition, see also A. J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, IV: *Le Dieu inconnu et la gnose* (études bibliques) (Paris: Gabalda, 1954).

<sup>29</sup> The Greek expression ἀ·λήσθεια is a pure negation of a negative action: 'not-to-hide'.

<sup>30</sup> See the expression in Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, VII: "καὶ διὰ γνῶστεως ὁ θεὸς γιγνώσκεται, καὶ διὰ ἀγνωσίας" (PG 3.872)—"et per cognitionem Deus cognoscitur ac per ignoracionem" [God is known through knowledge and through ignorance] and compare with *IsU* 9–11, in which it says that *vidyā* and *avidyā* are both necessary (and both powerless) in attaining the goal.

<sup>31</sup> "How can we make such an affirmation about him, seeing that all we still say about him is said through negation?" asks Plotinus in *Ennead* VI.8.2. The answer is boldly given by Thomas Aquinas: "Hoc ipsum est Deum cognoscere, quod nos scimus ignorare de Deo quid sit" (*Comm. on Dionys.* VII.14 ("To know God means precisely this: to be aware that we do not know what God is"). He is known through ignorance: "Et est rursus divinissima Dei cognitio quae est per ignorantiam cognita" [Again, it is the most divine knowledge of God which comes from unknowing], says the Latin version (Joannes Saracenus) of Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* VII.3 (PG 3.872): "καὶ ἐστιν ἀδύις ἡ θειοτάτη τοῦ θεοῦ γνώση, ἡ δὲ ἀγνωσίας γιγνώσκεμένη" and the text continues (Migne version): "secundum illam quae, supra intellectum est, unionem, quando mens a rebus omnibus recedens ac demum semetipsam deserens" [which is achieved in a union far beyond mind, when mind turns away from all things, even from itself].

<sup>32</sup> On this point we agree with G. Vallin, "Essence et formes de la Théologie négative," *Revue de Méthaphysique et de Morale* IV–IX, no. 2–3 (1958): 168 (Paris).

<sup>33</sup> Strictly speaking, existing and non-existing being, *sadasacca*—BG IX.19: "sadasacchāmarjuna" [I am existing and non-existing being (o Arjuna)] is the perfect formula. He does not say *bhūtabhūta*—*esse et non-esse*—or *natura et naturata*, but *ens et non ens* (*bhūta*) is the past tense of *bhū*, to be, to become, and *sas* is the present tense of *as*, to be). Contrariwise, he is *bhūta-bhṛta* [he who sustains beings] and

because He is contradictory but because (being beyond all contradiction, i.e., all negation) he is infinite: if he were only A he would be limited by *non-A*. The Absolute, therefore, includes each one<sup>34</sup> (namely, A and non-A), but not in the sense that he is both A and non-A (or, so to speak, B), since he is neither A nor non-A,<sup>35</sup> although the negation cannot, in any case, be too drastic.<sup>36</sup> We must listen rather than ask.<sup>37</sup> "He is the One before whom all words retreat."<sup>38</sup> Silence is far better.<sup>39</sup>

### The Place of Error

As we said earlier, the place of error is in assertion and, for this very reason, belongs to the sphere of logic. Error, nevertheless, is also related to the existential condition of man. We can easily see, therefore, without falling prey to a purely intellectualistic identification of error with evil, that error also has a resonance of a moral nature and that ignorance, inasmuch as it causes error, is not always free of sin.<sup>40</sup> Error may also make its appearance when we

*bbūtabbhāvāna* [source of beings]: *BG* IX.5. He claims, moreover, to be "neither existent nor non-existent," *sattannāśaducyate* (*BG* XIII.12). This second expression, which is purely negative, takes all value from the interpretation of *sat* as manifested (*Sāṅkārti*) or present (Rāmānuja) being and *asat* as unmanifested and past/future being, since he is neither *sat* nor *asat*; see also: "Then there was not non-existent nor existent" (*RV* X.129.1, Max Müller trans.), or "Then there was neither existence nor non-existence" (S. N. Dasgupta trans.). See *Subāla Up.* I.I and II.I, and also *SB* X.53.1 and 2.

<sup>34</sup> See the language of medieval Christian mysticism: "The pure Word answered and spoke thus: 'I will tell you more: unless man can comprehend two opposites together, that is, two contradictory things, it will really not be easy to speak to him of such things. Until, in fact, he understands this, he has not yet begun the path of life of which I speak'" (Heinrich Seuse, *Büchlein der Wahrheit*, trans. and ed. J. M. Curò, in Henry Suso's *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* and *Little Book of Truth* [London, 1953], chap. 5, p. 190).

<sup>35</sup> See *KenU* I.3: "anyadeva tada vidiitādatho aviditādhi" [It is different from the known, it is also above the unknown]. See also II.2: "yonastad veda tad veda no na vedeti veda ca" [He who knows it as it is known and as it is not known, knows it truly].

<sup>36</sup> "Quae pugna verborum" [What battle of words], St. Augustine says with regard to our affirmation and the knowledge of ineffability: "silentio cavenda potius quam voce petenda est" (*De doctrina christiana* 6 [PL 34.21] [It is better to evade this verbal conflict silently than to quell it disputatiously]).

<sup>37</sup> "O Gārgi, do not ask too much, lest thy head should fall off. Thou askest too much about a deity about which we are not to ask too much. Do not ask too much, O Gārgi" (*Bu* III.6, Max Müller trans.). See also *AV* X.7.28: "Hiranyagarbha—the golden embryo—beyond which nothing more must be said"—one has to stop somewhere! See "Loquere Domine, quia audit servus tuus" [Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears], 1 Kings 3:9 and St. Paul, "Non plus sapere [Not to think more highly]—ὑπερφρονεῖν—quam oportet sapere—φρονεῖν—sed sapere ad sobrietatem—σωφρονεῖν [but to think with sober judgment]" (Rom 12:3).

<sup>38</sup> See the laconic phrase in the *TU*, "rato vāco nivartante" [whence every voice recedes, from which (all) words back away] (II.4.I, and II.9.I). See parallel passages: *BU* III.8.9.27; IV.2.4; *Kaṭha* III.15; VI.12; *Kena* III.8.II, etc.

<sup>39</sup> "Deus honoratur silentio, non quod de ipso nihil dicamus vel inquiramus, sed quia intelligimus nos ab ejus cognitione fecisse" [God is honored by silence, not because we do not desire to speak of him or because we do not want to find him, but because we understand that he has made us with his knowledge] (Thomas Aquinas, *In Boet, De Trinitate*, Proem., q.2, a.1).

<sup>40</sup> "Error manifeste habet rationem peccati, non enim est absque praesumptione, quod aliquis de ignoratis sententiam ferat" [Error evidently has the nature of sin, for it is presumptuous for a person to make judgments about things of which the person is ignorant] (Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, q.3, a.7).

proudly overstep the limits of the assertion and fall into totally "nominalistic" nothingness.<sup>41</sup>

To avoid making our study on the truth too complicated by introducing the collateral problem of error, however, we limit ourselves to this simple note regarding the place of error.

'S is P' is a true assertion, but it is not the truth; it contains only a partial truth about S and about P. Error is therefore possible. If we venture beyond the space within which this expression is valid, the error becomes immediately apparent. This can happen in two different ways.

#### *Extrapolation*

Extrapolation is the abuse of a partial truth and occurs when the subject is pushed beyond its limits. "This is a snake" is a false assertion if by 'this' we mean the actual rope lying in our path a few steps ahead. We say 'S is P' but, in actual fact, what we should say is 'S<sup>1</sup> is P'. It is not, in fact, the object before us that is a snake; it is the image we have formed in our imagination that is a true (image of a) snake.<sup>42</sup>

The most extraordinary example of this today is found in the New Physics. The only error of "classic" physics was that of extrapolating the validity of its conceptions beyond the macrocosmic field in which it was—and still is (macroscopically)—valid.

We are forced to say S despite the fact that we are unable to reach S in its entirety and that, in reality, to us S is S<sup>1</sup> + S<sup>2</sup> + S<sup>3</sup>. . . .

Therefore, 'S<sup>n</sup> is P<sup>m</sup>' will be true, but 'S<sup>m</sup> is P<sup>n</sup>' will not. Our error lies precisely in having assumed that S = S<sup>n</sup>.

#### *Interpolation*

Interpolation is the inclusion of a similar element in the Predicate. "That is a rope" is a false assertion if by 'rope' we mean the ultimate reality of 'that' which we rightly call a rope. 'That' is undoubtedly a rope; but it is also much more than a rope and we fall into error if we think of 'that' as only a rope and nothing more.

We say (and we cannot do otherwise) that 'S is P'; yet we are not able to complete the predicate of S, and so, in actual fact, what we mean is 'S<sup>n</sup> is P<sup>m</sup>', which is true for P<sup>n</sup> but not for P<sup>m</sup>.

### The Ineffable Existential Plurality of Truth

"There is one Truth" is a common statement that is accepted without excessive critical analysis. Let us analyze this special assertion from the point of view of 'S and P'.

The *Truth*, the absolute Truth that is the only absolute Reality—that is, God—is undoubtedly one. Yet when, in human discussions, this oneness of the truth is pompously affirmed, in most cases it is not to declare the oneness of the Absolute, but the correctness of the speaker's personal opinions. Now the danger of this formulation is that it overlooks the existential character of truth and indulges dangerously in a type of unilateral essentialism,

<sup>41</sup> See the spiritual quality of this precept: "The essence of the truth most glorious and most exalted is nothing but Being. . . . Every 'how' and 'why' have made their appearance through Him; but in himself He transcends every 'how' and 'why'. Jami, in E. H. Whinfield, *Lawā'iḥ* (London, 1928), 12—*apud* Margaret Smith, *The Sufi Path of Love (An Anthology)* (London: Luzac, 1954), 48.

<sup>42</sup> See Śankara, *BUB* V.14.4 and also IV.1.4, which relates truth to sensual evidence (i.e., what we see with our eyes).

or even overly narrow rationalism. 'S is P' only contradicts 'S is Q' if Q is equal to non-P (i.e., Q = non-P). For us, however, S accepts many predicates, since none of them are able to complete the subject.

The Truth, the absolute Truth, is one, since the Truth is the Reality of the One Being. Here on the earth, however, during this interlude that is our human life, in which we must still be for the very fact that we are currently in a state of *becoming*, truth is also the actual real existence of each being, and consequently, human truth is as multiform as human existence. Every being, in fact, has as much truth within him as the being he possesses. The various philosophical systems are free to discuss the nature of this truth or this being, but it is not the task of an initial study on existential phenomenology.

We can say, therefore, that the *existential* relative truth of the world and, specifically, the truth of human beings, is one, since existence is one, and it is multiple insofar as beings are multiple. Every being is truth inasmuch as every being is being, because my being *truth* and my being *being* is the very same "*you are that*" pronounced by God.

'S is P'. I am S (*you*) inasmuch as I am P (*that*) which the Absolute is 'creating', 'making', 'calling' into being. I am S—myself—inasmuch as I am (obedient to, corresponding to) P (the P that I am supposed to be, that I am called to be).

There is, however, a subtle but extremely important temporal difference. The *you* pronounced by God is my *being*; the *that*, on the other hand, is my *truth*. From God's point of view we could then invert this and say that the *you* is my truth, my present and itinerant truth—here truth is the subject—and the *that* is my being, my pilgrim being, still on its way toward the fullness of its being—here my being is the Predicate of God (though, obviously, not a logical predicate). To express this more appropriately, as long as we are in time we are not yet 'that' which we shall be and, for the same reason, we are not yet the '*you*' that God eternally pronounces. This is the constitutive tension of created existence (*ex-sistentia*) that medieval Christianity was so fond of discussing. In the realm of the Absolute, beyond time,<sup>43</sup> my being and my truth are one and the same thing. '*You are that*' is the divine 'spark' of God's Being and God's Truth that I am. But right now, immersed as we are in time, this '*you are that*' appears to me as a '*you shall be that*': truth is my goal, my end; it is *that* which I will be. I must make, conquer, my truth!<sup>44</sup>

In other words, truth, my truth, is the real being that I shall be. This truth is the ontological path of the becoming of my being on this earth, and the real goal of the fullness of my being once I have attained the perfection of my condition.<sup>45</sup> Truth is *Gati*.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See Rev 10:6.

<sup>44</sup> See Jn 3:21, which used this same expression: "ο δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν," "qui facit veritatem" [he who practices, who does, the truth]—an expression that has its roots in the Old Testament; see Gen 22:10; 47:29; Tob. 4:6; 13:6. It is well known that the Hebrew concept of truth expresses more a moral category than an intellectual category. In Hebrew there is no equivalent term for the Greek *veritas*. When the latter appears, quite rarely, in the LXX version it corresponds to *lēb*, 'heart'. To express intelligence the NT, like the OT, generally uses *xarōdia*, *lēb*.

<sup>45</sup> See Eph 6:13.

<sup>46</sup> *Satyam hi paramā gati*, says the Mahābhārata (Āntiparva, CLXII.4)—"Truth is the greatest goal." *Gati* means 'way' and also 'destination' (it has also been translated as 'refuge'), and expresses the pilgrim state and the end of the journey. See BG IX.18, when Kṛṣṇā says he is *gati*. The word comes from the root *gam*, to go. See the capital question in CUI.9.1: "What is the *gati* [purpose, end, base, foundation] of this world?"

This is why truth is that which will be and, for us human beings, takes the form of that which *I-must-be*. Truth is duty,<sup>47</sup> it is *dharma*.<sup>48</sup> We must *make* truth;<sup>49</sup> it must be witnessed,<sup>50</sup> not as if it were an external imposition coming from somewhere else, but as the deep ontological law of our becoming, of our growing toward the fullness of being. This law of our being is our truth and belongs to the innermost structure of our being, so that, in this sense, the truth is identified with our own being as it must be, as it should be, as it will be if we do not fail, in this earthly adventure of ours, to discover, shape, and redeem our being.<sup>51</sup>

From this point of view we cannot say that the truth is one; this is a formula that has been used all too often for the sole purpose of imposing and demanding the acceptance of the truth. Truth is my being, and no one can violate that which constitutes the age-old ineffable relationship between God who calls me and my being that is His call (and my answer). The truth is multiple, just as beings are multiple. I must follow my own *personal* path, and there is no other path that I can take, none other that is the same as my personal path. I am my own path.

On the other hand, this plurality of truth is ineffable, inexpressible, in the same way that my own being is ineffable.<sup>52</sup> Ultimately, this is because my own being is simply a divine expression and all other expression, therefore, is just a secondhand formulation that is incapable of giving me my being, but merely a translation of it.

And for this very reason we cannot draw any conclusion from this multiplicity of existential truth. If we were to indulge, in fact, in any form of relativism or even indifferentism we would undoubtedly end up by completely misunderstanding our problem. Indeed, the moment I begin to talk about truth I am brought down into the sphere of essences, and here it would definitely be inappropriate and senseless for us to attempt to defend any multiplicity of truth. Existential truth expresses the unity, the oneness, of every being and, as such, is ineffable. Consequently, any expression I may try to formulate would be an essence and, therefore, necessarily *universal* and common to others (otherwise it would be incommunicable, unintelligible); hence, it would be neither *my* truth nor pluralistic truth.

### The Essentially Imperfect Oneness of Truth

If truth, like beings, is multiple, it is also one as beings themselves are one. Things are *ἐν καὶ πολλά*—one and many (Plato). Oneness and plurality cannot be placed separately.

<sup>47</sup> See Eph 4:15. Here it is not a matter of a mere moral duty to tell the truth (see Lk 18:20) or of being simple in our speech (see Mt 5:3) but of *doing* truth (ἀληθεύοντες), of being *in* truth.

<sup>48</sup> "Satyam satsu sadā dharmah satyam dharmah sanā tanāḥ" (Sāntiparva, CLXII.4) ("Truth is always *dharma* in beings, truth is eternal"). See also XLIII.24, the ethical aspect of truth: "There is no greater *dharma* than truth and there is no greater sin than falsehood. Truth is truly the ground (base, root, fulcrum) of *dharma*."

<sup>49</sup> See St. Augustine's expression 'Veritatem facere' [To do truth] (*Confessions*, 10.1), as a traditional echo of the injunction of the Gospel (see Jn 2:21).

<sup>50</sup> See Jn 18:37: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice." This is an expression that has no model or parallel in the Old Testament (according to Dodd, op. cit., "ἀλήθεια therefore stands here for the realm of pure and eternal reality, as distinct from this world of transient phenomena" [176]). We cannot, however, discuss this point here.

<sup>51</sup> See the profound study by F. Inciarte, *Die Reflexionbestimmungen in dialektischen Denken* (dissertation, Cologne, 1957).

<sup>52</sup> "Individuum ineffabile" states a principle of Scholastic philosophy.

Yet while a certain plurality of truth exists, it would be wrong to conclude that the truth is not one. Not only is divine absolute truth one, in fact, but relative human truth is also. And this applies in two senses: metaphysically and logically.

### *Metaphysically*

I am the 'you' of a divine expression, but although, from my point of view, my *ego*, my person, is not your person, from the point of view of the Absolute, God does not declare, "*You are that*," twice in order to call you and I into existence. Not only is the divine and timeless Being One, but all beings produced, created, emanated by His Being are also one. The whole creation (if we prefer to use this expression) and the whole universe are also one, just as the 'S is P' of the divine *Logos* is one. He pronounces an eternal 'S is P' just once, and this P—we would venture to say—includes everything that exists.<sup>53</sup>

τὸ δν πολλαχώς λέγεται—this was Aristotle's felicitous formulation and profound intuition; Being is said in many ways, πολλαχώς, and yet still remains Being, τὸ δν.<sup>54</sup>

However we choose to explain this oneness and this plurality—whether through creation, analogy, maya, the *upādhi*, δόξα, *haecceitas*, time, existence, monads, theism, pantheism, panentheism, and so on—the fact remains that being, in its deepest sense, is one and, therefore, truth is one.

### *Logically*

Our intellect is not our whole being and, consequently, we must always be careful not to mistake the essential aspect of reality, which our intellect is able to grasp, with reality itself. This said, however, the intellectual dimension of our being is the most precious gift we have and also the only means through which we are able to learn, feel, be conscious, and in a certain sense, be.

We cannot, therefore, abandon the attempt to know the truth, nor must we avoid formulating it.

Again in this sense, the truth expressed and formulated must be one, seeing that our intellect grasps the essences of beings (up to a point, but it grasps them, nevertheless) and discovers the essential structure of the world. Here it is the very principle of noncontradiction that safeguards our thought and the essential oneness of the world.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> I have attempted to demonstrate elsewhere that this was precisely the theological idea common to the Middle Ages and the patristic period. See a simple traditional example: "Deus enim cognoscendo se, cognoscit omnem creaturam. Verbum igitur in mente conceptum, est representativum omnis eius quod actu intelligitur. . . . Sed quia Deus uno actu et se et omnia intelligitur, unicum Verbum eius est expressivum non solum Patris, sed etiam creaturarum" [For God by knowing Himself, knows every creature. Now the word conceived in the mind is representative of everything that is actually understood. . . . But because God by one act understands Himself and all things, His only Word is expressive not only of the Father, but of all creatures] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q.34. a.3. See also "quia una actionis generat filium, qui est heres, lux de luce, et creat creaturas, quae est tenebra, creata, facta, non filius nec heres luminis, illuminationis et creationis" [By means of a single action (God) both generates the Son who is his heir, light from light, and creates the creature darkness, something created and made, not a son or an heir of light, illumination and creation] (Eckhart, *Expos. in Job*. I.5, no. 73 [op. cit., 61]).

<sup>54</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.2 (1003a33); see also 1003b4.

<sup>55</sup> "Unumquodque est intelligibile in quantum est unum. Qui enim non intelligit unum, nihil intelligit, ut dicit philosophus in IV Metaph" [Everything is intelligible inasmuch as it is one. He who does not comprehend one, comprehends nothing, as Aristotle affirms] (Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q.21, a.3).

'S is P' would therefore be the essential and perfect knowledge of all things, which attracts, like an ideal, all our intellectual assertions.<sup>56</sup> In actual fact, however, our knowledge concerns 'S<sup>1</sup> is P<sup>1</sup>', 'S<sup>2</sup> is P<sup>2</sup>', 'S<sup>3</sup> is P<sup>3</sup>', and so on, and in the context of each assertion the truth can only be one. This means that if 'S<sup>n</sup> is P<sup>n</sup>' it is not possible for 'S<sup>n</sup> to be P<sup>m</sup>'. Our intellectual truth of S<sup>n</sup> is only P<sup>n</sup> and not P<sup>m</sup>. The truth of S<sup>n</sup> is one only: P<sup>n</sup>—and here we could apply and develop all the rules of logic, moving within the sphere of a *dialecticology of truth*. In this sense also, "truth is imperishable, eternal, unchanging."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "Quanto scientia est perfectior, tanto est magis unita" [The more perfect a science (knowledge) is, the more it is one] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, III, q.2, ad 1).

<sup>57</sup> "Satyam nāmāvyayam nityamavikāri" (Mahābhārata, loc. cit., CLXII.10).

## EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS

*The cathartic and mesoteric nature of truth.*—The truth shall make us free;<sup>1</sup> if we truly attain hidden knowledge we will gain freedom;<sup>2</sup> truth triumphs always;<sup>3</sup> eternal life is to know You—Christ (—and—) God;—<sup>4</sup> only the wise man is free;<sup>5</sup> ignorance (that is, the nonknowledge of the truth) is the cause of all evil;<sup>6</sup> error and sin are not without a deep metaphysical connection.<sup>7</sup> Everything is founded on the truth;<sup>8</sup> true holiness is sanctification in truth.<sup>9</sup> In short, truth brings liberation and is fulfillment, completion.<sup>10</sup> These are just a few examples of a perpetual human tradition, ancient and modern, Eastern and Western.

Here two considerations appear obvious: the first is that this truth, as expressed by almost all the religions and philosophical traditions of the world, is not just a mere exactitude of statements—it is a real existential truth.<sup>11</sup> The second is that truth has a cathartic function;<sup>12</sup> that is to say, it performs a purifying action on our being, not by means of any esoteric or magical character but thanks, rather, to the very nature of truth and to the relationship it

<sup>1</sup> See Jn 8:32.

<sup>2</sup> See BG IX.I.

<sup>3</sup> "Satyam eva jayate" [only the true prevails] (*MundU* III.I.6), the motto of the Indian Republic Constitution.

<sup>4</sup> See Jn 17:3.

<sup>5</sup> This is precisely the title of a treatise by Philo: "περὶ τοῦ πάντα σπουδαίου ἐλεύθερον εἶναι," "Quod omnis probus liber sit" ("Every Good Man Is Free"; see Cohn and Wendland edition of 1896–1906). The belief that γνῶσις—gnosis—frees us from εἱμαρμένη—fate—is perhaps the most widespread cliché in popular Hellenistic philosophy. See Dodd, op. cit., 176ff., and A. J. Festugière, *L'idéal religieux des Grecs et l'Evangile* (Paris, 1932), 101ff.

<sup>6</sup> For *avidyā* as a cause of disappointment, see *Kathu U*I.2.4; *Bhāgavata* I.3.33, etc.

<sup>7</sup> It is superfluous to recall Socrates and the influence he has had on posterior philosophical thought.

<sup>8</sup> *Sarvam satre pratishtitam* (Mahāb., loc. cit., CLXII.5).

<sup>9</sup> ἀγίασσον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ (John 17.17: "sanctify them through your truth"), and immediately afterward the text adds, δὲ λόγος δὲ σὸς ἀληθείᾳ ἔστιν ("your word is truth").

<sup>10</sup> See the three concepts—different, yet in some way similar, each one implying an entire cultural world: *contemplatio*, *śāṅgrāta* (theory), and *buddhiyoga*.

<sup>11</sup> As regard the New Testament it has been shown—*usque ad satisitatem*—that its concept of truth has a definitely existential character. See vgr. the article by Bultmann ἀληθεία in T.W.N.T. (op. cit.); Dodd, op. cit., 152, 170ff.; A. Wikenhauser, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (Regensburg, 1948), 148ff., etc.

<sup>12</sup> For the Platonic conception of καθαρός, see *Sophist.* 226d; *Polit.* 293d, 303d, 308c; *Leg.* 790dff.; for Aristotle, see *Polit.* 6 (1341a23); 7 (1341b38–39), etc.

has with our being.<sup>13</sup> The truth brings liberation and leads us to perfection because it is the Freedom and Vision of God.<sup>14</sup>

It is very enlightening to follow through history the rise, fall, and resurgence of this cathartic aspect of the truth within Western thought, as it is an accurate indicator of the evolution of philosophy in the West.

The very concept of truth itself, in the golden age of Greek philosophy, comes directly from the fundamental idea of purification, and its founding presupposition is the indisputable intellectualism of the great Hellenic systems. We might outline the dialectical events of this process as follows:

Plato and Aristotle, like Heraclitus before them and Stoia and other similar philosophical movements in later periods, inherited from the dawn of philosophy and human history—and nature—the idea that man's primary duty consists in the attaining of his salvation, in his union with the Divine, in his perfection or happiness. The tremendous intuition of the Greek founders of the Western culture lie in their understanding that the Divine is Being and, therefore, union with the Godhead meant assimilation into Being. This intuition, however, was formulated (and here is the beginning of intellectualism) in such a way that to be one with Being meant to know Being, almost as if there were no higher path for attaining Being. Knowledge, on its own, was considered capable of achieving this mysterious assimilation, this union between the 'knower' and the 'known', the subject and the object. This is, in fact, Σεωρία, *teoria*, the Greek contemplation—the knowledge of Being. Only through contemplation can we reach our destination, the purpose of our life. Our mind, νοῦς, is the organ we have for reaching it, and truth, ἀλήθεια, is the discovery of Being, the disclosure of reality, union with the Godhead. Thus truth is the fundamental value; wise is he who seeks the truth and he alone shall be saved, he alone shall obtain ἀθανατία, immortality, he alone shall be glorified and may attain to Being, the supreme purpose of life.<sup>15</sup> Truth, then, became the only road that could lead to Being, and philosophy finally replaced religion—or, more accurately, became the *one* enlightened religion. The only way to union with the Godhead, which was now identified with Being, was contemplation, which automatically produces supreme fulfillment, regardless of moral values. Truth is cathartic on its own; in fact, it is more than that—truth is the purified and perfect goal. Bliss is the effect of a life 'lived' in harmony with the essences of Things. Thus far, Indic philosophy may certainly be in agreement, except for a few differences of little account.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See T. N. Chubb, "The Nature of Truth," *Indian Philosophical Congress* 25 (Calcutta, 1950), 200, which describes the nature of truth as *mantra*, whose function consists neither in educating nor in entertaining, but in awakening the *avātara* of Reality within us so that we may be able to convey to it the supreme Being.

<sup>14</sup> See 1 Jn 3:2: "δημοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα, διτὶ ὁψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἔστι" [we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is]. Intuition, the perfect knowledge, the vision of God will make us into God. See the same idea from the point of view of God, who sees us and tells us: "Ego dixi Dii estis, et filii Excelsi" ["I said, 'You are gods,' and you are all sons of the Most High" (Ps 81:6)] and Christ's own interpretation: "Si illos dixit Deos, ad quos sermo Dei factus est—εἰ ἑκείνους εἶπεν θεοὺς τρόπος οὓς δὲ λόγος τού θεού ἐγένετο—ετ non potest solvi scriptura" [If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken] (Jn 10:35).

<sup>15</sup> Hippolytus, the famous writer, antipope, and martyr of the third century, imbued as he was with the Hellenic spirit, may still write, "εἰ ἀθανατός, ἔσται καὶ Σεός" (*apud Festugiere*, op. cit., 40): "If you are immortal, you shall also be God."

<sup>16</sup> For the sake of brevity, and to avoid the complex problem of Christianity's clash with human and philosophical thought, we shall not discuss here the relationship that exists in Indic philosophy between truth, contemplation, and salvation.

However (and here is where it all began to slip), all this failed to take into account that Reality and Being, and even our reality and our being, are somewhat more than a pure transparent essence that our γνῶσις is able to know.<sup>17</sup> The first conception, nevertheless, though it is undoubtedly unilateral, is not wrong, and the Christian period of Western thought did not hesitate to welcome it, even going too far at times to agree with it; yet the existential reasons for sin, redemption, the intrinsic human condition, grace, the strength and weakness of the will, the irreducibility of human life to a simple pattern of thought, and even more, the impossibility (except for a very few) to achieve and practice ἡρωπία, undermined the Greek intellectualism of Plato and Aristotle. The Christian collision began by casting doubt over the entire meaning of philosophy, and from the earliest times up until Scholasticism Christian philosophers were perfectly aware that the truth had an existential character and, consequently, an extremely important cathartic dimension. They could not forget that after the original sin there existed in man a deep-rooted inconsistency, that all values were fragmented and divided, that here on earth truth did not always correspond to goodness, that the fullness of truth was a gift like all other human values and that Christian contemplation was much more than a mental act.

What is truly important to Christianity is not the psychological realization of truth but the ontological acceptance of truth, which does not even demand *human* knowledge of it. Pure faith, supernatural faith, saves, and even a child can be saved without needing to humanly 'know' it. The way to salvation is not through 'knowledge' or even contemplation, but through redemption. And it is not the wise man who attains liberation—it is the humble man who shall be freed, that is, redeemed. Christianity, in fact, does not teach *first and foremost how* we might reach the Absolute, but reveals to us that the Absolute has *already* redeemed us and makes known to us His call. In other words, it is not the essential (human) truth, but the existential (divine) truth that saves man. The Christian message does not first invite us to discover the truth with our minds, but reveals to us that the Truth has discovered us and invites us to embrace it. This Truth is neither pure essence nor bare existence; it is a living theandric Person that is both Truth and the way to Truth. Not self-redemption, but the redemption of my being thanks to a personal faithfulness to God through Christ; not self-fulfillment, but the fulfillment of myself through death and resurrection in Christ and through Christ—this is the Christian message that overturns all rational philosophy and saves us from becoming idolaters of philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> It is not by chance that *gnosis* was the principle Christian heresy of the early centuries.

<sup>18</sup> See the density of Indic spirituality, as it appears in *KathU* I.2.23 and *MundU* III.2.3: "It is said that the Ātman cannot be gained except by those whom the Ātman chooses." See also the genuine Christian tradition: "Nisi enim iustitia iustificaret, nemo ipsam cognosceret, sed sibi soli esset cognita, secundum illud: Deum nemo vidit unquam: unigenitus qui est in sinu patris, ipse enarravit, infra [If justice did not justify, no one would have knowledge of it, but it would be known only to itself, as it is said: "No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made him known"] (Jn 1:18); neque patrem qui novit nisi filius [No one knows the Father except the Son] (Mt 11:27); et nemo scit, nisi qui accipit [and no one knows but he who receives it] (Rev 2:17). "Universaliter enim perfectionem divinam nemo novit, nisi qui accipit, pura iustitia sibi sola nota est et iusto assumpto ab ipsa iustitia. Et hoc est quod dicit auctoritas quod trinitas, deus sibi sola nota est et homini assumpto, Unde in Ps 65:4: 'beatus quem elegisti et assumpsisti'" [Generally it is true that none knows divine perfection but he that receives it, and so it is with justice, which is known only to itself and to he who is begotten by justice itself. And this is the meaning of that which has been said, that the Trinity is known only to God and to Man (Christ) who has been begotten. For this it is written in the Psalms (65:4): "Blessed is he whom thou hast chosen and taken to thee"] (Meister Eckhart, *Exposit. in*

With the decline of the intellectual influence of Christianity in Western culture and the birth of rationalism and idealism, truth lost the close connection it had with life and existence and became simply a characteristic of pure reason and the mere accuracy of our judgment.<sup>19</sup> Theory is no longer Σεπία, nor even *contemplation*, but an intellectual value separate from both practice and ethics. Truth no longer has an existential and religious meaning, and today it has little to do with power, happiness, and everyday life; it has become rigorous and exact, it penetrates the sphere of logic and allows itself to be approached by none but those who hold the passport of clarity and distinction. Logical truth, having strictly limited and reduced its field, has made enormous progress. Its most extraordinary products are modern philosophy and science.<sup>20</sup> Numerous allegiances have been broken and the dust of many centuries of indiscrimination has been swept away, yet the truth remains imprisoned within the four walls of pure human reason.

The positive aspect of every kind of pragmatism from the last century up until the present day consists in the very effort made to free the truth from the pure tutelage of reason. Unfortunately, however, in doing so the truth is allowed to fall right into the arms of power, success, and pleasure....

European thought, nevertheless, is finally beginning to understand that truth also has an existential aspect and, in this context, a cathartic dimension, and to experience once again (albeit more judiciously) that truth always has practical consequences, that the problem of truth cannot be laid aside, and that the truth is never irrelevant.<sup>21</sup> And so we see a return to the perpetual philosophical tradition of mankind, according to which truth has always been greater than the mere display of mental gymnastics offered by our individual reason.<sup>22</sup> In fact, this third state is not a pure and simple return to the first period. The typical Western adventure has not been futile. Truth can no longer lose the rigor it has managed to gain, but it will still strive to retrieve its existential roots and its theological foundations.

*Iohan.* 1.1–5 (no. 15) (in the critical edition of the complete works [Stuttgart, Berlin: Kohlhammer (vol. 3) (1936), 13–14]. For the *auctoritas* referred to here, see Albertus Magnus, *In Iohan.*, c. 1.18; 55b; Thomas Aquinas, *In III Sent.*, d.14, q.1, a.2, obj.1; Bonavent., *ibid.*, a.1, q.2, obj.3; Isidor. Hisp., *Quaest. in Exodum* c. 42, no. 3 (PL 83.308) (*apud Eckardi textum*).

<sup>19</sup> Christian spirituality has always vehemently asserted the existential character of truth. I would like to include here a modern-day testimonial of this, seeing that those of ancient times are well known and innumerable. "There is a way of knowing the truth that makes us truer, both to ourselves and to God, and therefore more real and more holy. But there is another way to accept the truth that causes us to become false and wicked. The difference between these two ways depends on the action of our will. If, in fact, my will acts as a servant of truth, consecrating my whole soul to what intelligence has contemplated, then I will be sanctified by the truth and I will also be sincere. 'My whole body shall be full of light' (Mt 6:22) [see *Gita* 13.17]. But, if my will takes possession of the truth as if it were its master, as if the truth were my servant and belonged to me as a right of conquest, then surely I will behave toward it at my own discretion. And this is the root of all falsehood" (T. Merton, *No Man Is an Island* [London, 1955], 174).

<sup>20</sup> See with regard to science, R. Panikkar, *Ontonomía de la ciencia. Sobre el sentido de la ciencia actual* (Madrid: Gredos, 1961).

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Gustav Schmaltz, "Das 'veritatem facere' des Augustinus als Wesen des Reifungsvorganges," *Psyche* 6 (1952/53): 304ff.

<sup>22</sup> *Sat�am, bbagavab, jñānavijñā iti* [The Truth, Sir, I desire to know!] is the symbolic exclamation made by the disciple Narada to the guru Sanatkumāra (CU VII.16).

Summing up, we may say that truth begins by being regarded as simply a synonym of Being<sup>23</sup> (and, indeed, truth and being cannot be said to be two separate realities).

Then there is a second stage, representing a philosophical odyssey spanning approximately twenty-five centuries, which consists (if we might be allowed a perhaps excessive simplification) in the discovery and subsequent distinction of the essential characteristic of truth. Truth is not simply being, it is not being in itself, but being insofar as being known, as being dis-closed, revealed in oneself, as *ente*, as the relationship between being and 'a given' mind or intellect. The problem has been well and truly clarified. Truth and being are not two realities, but they are two different dimensions of reality. Only when metaphysics disappeared for a period of time from the Western horizon did truth remain alone without its counterpart, being. Then identification occurred again, this time from the other side. Now, finally, we are witnessing the third stage of Western philosophy, which is moving toward a synthesis of the two dimensions. Truth is indeed a relationship, but of an ancient type; it is not being *as such*, but being *as-being-to-us*, since our access to being passes through truth. And is not love another way to being? Of course—but this other way exceeds the limits of our study and even, perhaps, those of philosophy as a whole.<sup>24</sup>

Now let us proceed with our analysis of our particular dimension of the truth.

Man seems to be especially attracted by truth, at times even more than God, or freedom or heaven, and so on. This is not merely a sign of the times; it has always been an indicator of a constant characteristic of truth, implicit in its specific mediatory nature, in the very fact that it is a bridge between the absolute, the definitive, the eternal on one hand, and the relative, the mutable, the temporal on the other.<sup>25</sup> Union, oneness, liberation, bliss, heaven, vision of God, and so on are all terms expressing this final state of man—and mankind—that we must strive to attain and that here on earth we must already begin to achieve, even though it will always be in an imperfect and inadequate manner. Truth, on the other hand, takes on a specific meaning as Relationship, as mediator, as a bridge between these two worlds;<sup>26</sup> it is also the messenger between essence and existence. Truth (*materialiter, in re*), in actual fact, coincides with Being, God, Good, and so on, but, *formally* speaking, it specifically implies a certain reference to us, the predicate of the Absolute Subject. Truth is S, but it is the S of

<sup>23</sup> The Sanskrit word for truth, *satyam*, from *sat*, being, is another example not only of the ancient character of truth but also of its indistinction from being.

<sup>24</sup> See "Truth is higher than everything, but higher still is true conduct," the statement by Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion (*apud* S. Ranhakrishnan, *History of Philosophy Eastern, Western, op. cit.*, I:515). We refrain from citing here Christian examples regarding love and goodwill.

<sup>25</sup> See the *terminus technicus* *satyasaiikalpa* of Hinduism, as the expression of a truth that is powerful and effective in itself. See *Mund* I.2.1. Expressing a truth always has a certain "*ex opere operato*" effectiveness. See the concept, common to almost all the ancient cultures, according to which knowing the true name of a thing or a person means having power over it. See the problem of the special case of God, whose true name remains hidden in this world. See the name of God in the Old Testament and the changing of the names of the saints in the New (Rev 3:4; 14:1, etc.).

<sup>26</sup> This is perhaps the profound meaning that explains why the speculation of the Advaita-Vedānta on being, *sai*, invariably converges with a theory on truth, *satya*, and, at the same time, on knowledge, *jñāna*. See O. Lacombe, *L'Absolu dans le Vedānta* (Paris, 1937), 57. See also the Greek philosophical thought sustaining that the object of γνῶσις—knowledge—is ἀλήθεια - truth. See the passage in Plato's *Republic* (508.Dff.) in which the idea of God is deemed to be the cause of science and of truth—ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀλήθεια—and, consequently, greater than knowledge and truth (γνῶσις καὶ ἀλήθεια). See also the relationship between γνῶσις and ἀλήθεια in the New Testament, *apud* Jn 8:32, etc. "It is nothing but knowledge," says *BU* II.4.12.

the ontological position 'S is P'. On the bridge of Truth we reach the Godhead; when God speaks he says only the truth, not because he is not permitted to express himself differently or because he is unable to speak falsely, but because his language—whatever it may be—is truth itself. Truth always has the nature of a revelation.<sup>27</sup> First we hear the truth, then we believe in it, and finally we put it into effect.<sup>28</sup> God communicates with us through his truth, and it is only through his truth that we are able to rise up to him. In other words, truth is the most human of the attributes of the Absolute<sup>29</sup> because, after all, we are nothing but children of Logos, divine Truth.<sup>30</sup>

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Summing up, we might express the existential phenomenological problem in the following terms: Why do we speak about Truth and not Being, Good, God, and so on?<sup>31</sup>—which, in fact, is the same as asking: What is the formal aspect—the *ratio formalis*—of Truth?

<sup>27</sup> "Truth speaks and we learn. In actual fact, *śruti*, to listen, is the way to Truth," said G. R. Malkani in his presidential speech at the Indian Philosophical Congress (Patna, 1949), 13. See also, on the same line of thought, his speech "Two Different Traditions of Pure Philosophy," *Indian Philosophical Congress XIX* (Ceylon, 1954), 59ff.

<sup>28</sup> St. Augustine laconically emphasizes this threefold mental state in approaching the greatest Christian mystery. He says that its purpose is to explain—"reddere rationem"—how the divine Tri-Unity, "dicitur, credatur, intelligatur," must be spoken, believed, and comprehended (*De Trinitate*, I.2). We first hear the truth and repeat it, pronouncing the exact formula. We accept it as the truth, only because it comes from God; that is, we *begin* to believe. Lastly, we comprehend, we realize that our faith has ceased to be blind and we see, not because of rational evidence but thanks to our personal experience (*fides oculata*). See the same structure in Indic wisdom: "The Upaniṣad says: 'The Self, dear Maitreyi, must be understood, it must be listened to by a teacher and by the Scripture, then it must be reflected upon, by way of reasoning, and lastly, resolutely we must apply ourselves to meditating upon it'. When *Śravana* (hearing), *manana* (reflection) and *nididhyasana* (meditation) are combined together, only then can unity with the Brahman be truly achieved, and not otherwise (i.e., not by hearing alone)" (*Śaṅkara, BUB* II.4.5). See also I.4.2 (loc. cit.).

<sup>29</sup> In the Bible there is a surprisingly strong link between mercy and truth. Mercy is not a sort of falsehood, a concession or weakening of the rights of Truth; on the contrary, this art of comprehension that goes by the name of mercy pertains precisely to truth. See Ps 24:10; 25:3; 35:5; 39:12, 56:4; 60:8; 74:11; 83:12; 88:15–25; 107:5; Tob. 3:2; Prov 3:3; 14:22; 16:16; 20:28; Hos 4:1. The θεος καὶ ἀλήθεια of the Old Testament may be compared to the χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια (grace and truth) of the New. See Jn 1:17, etc. See also for χάρις, Esther 2:9; Eccles 7:33; 11:37, etc.

<sup>30</sup> This is the central point of metatheological Christology.

<sup>31</sup> We have already seen that, ultimately, all these names are simply different expressions of the "One only, without a Second"—ekamevāvītiyam—CU VI.2.1 ("I am that Supreme One—I—without a second" (*Śaṅkara, Upadesasāhasrī* X.3.7)). It is interesting to note that this expression is not only perfectly orthodox within the sphere of Christianity also, but it may even be cited *ad pedem litterae* by a church father—"Unus iraque Deus, unum nomen, una divinitas, una majestas. Nullus ergo secundus: quia principium omnium Trinitas est, et Trinitas primatus super omnia est. Ergo unus et non est secundus. Unus est, quia secundus non habet; quia unicus solus sine peccato, solus sine adjutorio, qui ait: 'Respxi, et non erat adjutor' (Isa. 63.5)" [Only one God, only one name, only one Godhead and only one glory. There is no second, therefore, for the Trinity is the Beginning of all things and the supremacy of the Trinity is above all. Thus, One and not a Second; One without a Second; for He alone is one, without sin, He alone without help; He who says 'I looked all around and there was none to help me' (St. Ambrose, *De institutione virginis* 10.68 (PL 16.322–23). See Isa. 47.10: "Ego sum et praeter me non est altera" [I am, and none else beside me]—referring to the false and wicked wisdom of Babylon.

The formal aspect of truth, according to existential phenomenology, is its *mesoteric* character.<sup>32</sup> Truth, in fact, is a μεταξύ, a μεσότης, a means, a *medium*, a relationship, an internal relationship with itself. Strictly speaking, we may say that truth is not 'being'—τὸ ὅν—but 'being as such'—τὸ ὅν ἢ τὸ ὅν. We do not 'know' what is the nature of that which we call 'being', but we can 'not know', that is, we know only that 'being' *is*, which means we can only come as far as knowing 'being' as such—and this, indeed, is what truth is. Truth is being *as such*, that is, insofar as it is *manifest*—though not, mind you, how it appears *to me*, since I am not outside of being.<sup>33</sup>

In speaking of the Absolute we must transcend all categories, without, however, losing our perspective on reality. We must keep our intellect in contact with reality, and avoid the constitutive danger of our limited thought; the purely dialectical projection of our mental structures, in fact, is an unfounded extrapolation. It is right, therefore, to think and to move *ahead*, but, in so doing, we may run the risk of leaving reality and truth *behind us*.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, we cannot help striving to reach the ultimate end of our thought. We might also express what we have said in the last paragraph as follows:

If S is the absolute and ultimate 'reality', it is not for us (*quoad nos*), but in itself (*quoad se*); when we ask what S is, it is not S that asks this (not even the S in us) since S has no need to ask, and certainly does not—it is *itself*, and our being (or our *logos*) that asks. Now, we can only ask what S *is*—which means that whenever we 'ask' something, we are 'asking' what that thing *is*, and therefore the answer cannot go beyond the *is*, beyond the *being* that we are capable of receiving. In other words, in 'asking' or seeking to 'know' what a thing *is*, we 'make' of this thing a being and we cannot do otherwise. Thus, whatever S may consist in we can only say that it is L, where L is the *being* of S. This L is no different from S (it is the '*is*' of S), but that does not necessarily mean it has to be identical to S. It is the '*being*' of S, the '*being*' as *being*—it is the truth of S; it '*is*' S.<sup>35</sup>

Truth is the manifestation (and, we might add, the self-manifestation) of being, but not as *an object* and not *to someone*. Truth is the revelation of being, but not an external disclosure of it.

There is no spectator, there is *nothing* outside of being (*from, for, and to which* Being may be revealed or uncovered).<sup>36</sup> Yet in spite of this, truth is this very '*un-covering*' of the '*hidden*'; it is that '*reflection*' of the '*Simple One*', that '*image*'—εἰκὼν—of the '*Unimaginable*', that '*fullness*' of the '*Absolutus*' (cf. *solutus*). We call it the '*Logos*' of '*Silence*', and the '*that*' of the '*not-that*', for the very purpose of emphasizing the inadequacy of words in expressing it and the unique specificity of these and other similar concepts when they are applied to the Absolute.

<sup>32</sup> See μέσος, or the noun τὸ μέσον—middle, center, middle point, and at the same time, mediator, mediation, relationship, also public manifestation, appearance (of being).

<sup>33</sup> The words are placed in quotes here to give them a transcendent (and therefore analogical) sense.

<sup>34</sup> "Venture no further than has been established for you"—this would appear to be an ancient proverbial expression, yet it was incorporated in the Bible by St. Paul: μὴ ὑπὲρ & γέγραπται (1 Cor 4:6; see Rom 12:3, 16); see also Eccles 3:22; Prov 25:27; Ps 130:1; Eccles 7:1, etc.

<sup>35</sup> It is the *Logos* of the *Father*.

<sup>36</sup> Here we are faced with the problem of apophatism. Can we venture further than truth? Can we transcend being? Or, to put it in purely Christian terms, can we come to the Father if we leave aside or go beyond the Son? Or, more humbly, are we able to grasp in ourselves or in itself the Source of the Godhead (a name given to the Father by the eleventh Council of Toledo) (see Denz-Schön. 275) without the image, the εἰκὼν, the λόγος?

Being is truth because Being is not empty, but full—full of life, of truth, and of love. Truth is the manifestation, the epiphany of Being as *Being*.<sup>37</sup> This is why truth is the way that leads to Being.<sup>38</sup> Being manifests itself as Truth.<sup>39</sup>

In relation also to our *being-in-time*, truth has this epiphanic character (of manifestation, expression, appearance). And for us—*quoad nos*—until we reach our 'wholly divine' state, truth shall be the veil of Being, the shell inside which we are able to perceive Being.<sup>40</sup> It is not a purely intellectual Predicate that has become identified with S, but the ontological descent—*avatār*—of S as S. When S as S, when the subject emerges, appears to being not as the mere logical subject of a predicate but simply as being, this is Truth.<sup>41</sup> Truth is being as being.<sup>42</sup>

When beings truly *are*, this being of being—being qua being—is Truth. This is why we *are*, inasmuch as *we-are-truth*, and at the same time, *we advance in being*, as long as *we-are-true*.

Truth is the horizon of being; it is the line on which earth and heaven, Man and God, meet.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> In Christian theology the absolute Being is One, in a Supra-unity that is a *non-numerical Trinity*. On the danger of a concept of a purely *economic* Trinity, which is considered, that is, only in relation to the world and not as *immanent*, see S. Boulgakoff, *Le Paraclète*, French trans. (Paris, 1946), 15ff.

<sup>38</sup> See Jn 14:6: “ὅδος . . . πρὸς τὸν πατέρα”—“via . . . ad Patrem” [way . . . to the Father]. The philosophical problem of Truth is a part—and a manifestation—of the theological trinitarian question.

<sup>39</sup> See the profound expression by Xenophon: ἀληθεύσαται . . . τὰ δόγμα τέ ὡς δόγμα, καὶ τὰ μὴ δόγμα ὡς οὐδά [describing what were facts as facts and what were fictions as fictions] (*Anabasis IV.4.15*), and the equally metaphysical expression by St. Paul in Rom. 4:17: “God, who quickens the dead, and calls those things which are not as though they were.”

<sup>40</sup> See Jn 1:18. T. N. Chubb points out, “Truth in its existential nature . . . cannot be traced on a metaphysical plane” (*Nature of Truth*, op. cit., 199).

<sup>41</sup> “Und dieses Bekanntsein des Seins ist das innerste Wesen der Wahrheit” [And this familiarity of being is the innermost essence of truth] (H. U. v. Balthasar, *Wahrheit*, op. cit., 27).

<sup>42</sup> It is in this light, in my opinion, that the capital affirmation of Christ, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6), should be understood and theologically elaborated. See Jn 1:9 and Jn 1:5.

<sup>43</sup> We have continued to develop this study elsewhere, analyzing also its theological grounds. The key is to be sought in the underlying connection that exists between the doctrine of the Trinity and Christology—two problems that are almost always discussed separately. An extremely clear and profound panorama will open before us when we seek to study these two disciplines together. Reality in its entirety is the Father, the Christ, and the Holy Spirits.



## SECTION VI

### THE CONCEPT OF NATURE

#### A Historical and Metaphysical Analysis of a Concept\*

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#### Introduction

Every human work is the imprint of a personality. This clearly means that a production always reflects the being of its creator. But it also implies that the living person who has produced it is no longer there, but rather further along the way in his pilgrimage toward Plenitude. An imprint is the sign of a being who is already somewhere else. Such is the case of the present book, imprint of almost a decade ago, subsequently crystallized as a doctoral dissertation in 1945. During the following five years, my process of thought—which forms part of my personal life—continued to advance and left the path initiated by this investigation behind, though I never repudiated it.

Because I was concerned with the theological problem of the supernatural as the metaphysical substratum of an integral anthropology that could explain the personal and concrete Man, the real and historical Christian, the first thing I had to do was tackle the metaphysical problem of nature. Driven by the theological issue more *in vivo* than *in vitro*, I was on the verge of forgetting this dusty tome that I now present—having merely eliminated the mildew of five years of inane static gravitation—not without certain aversion, in order to alleviate myself from its weight, and in the hope that it may be, for some, a catalyst into the great mysteries of Reality.

Before turning to the problem of the supernatural, an important section on the Theology of Nature is needed, which deals with a series of questions that, although philosophical in nature, have found their full development within the theological sphere. Thus, certain themes

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that are fundamental in other instances are not found here—such as those of "nature and person," "subject," "I," "life," and so on.

*Deo afflante, natura coadiuvante, circumstantis non impedientibus*<sup>1</sup>—three factors that are quite hard to match—other imprints that are somewhat closer to our desired end will continue to make themselves visible, though they will always be unreachable while the path remains ascending.

On the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas  
Madrid, March 7, 1951

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<sup>1</sup> "With God's inspiration, and the help of Nature, and if circumstances do not prevent me."

## PROLOGUE TO THE SECOND EDITION

To reprint a work of philosophy in our frenzied times, a quarter of a century after it has been written, implies little less than a brazen confession in favor of a *philosophia perennis*, or the inexplicable humility of stirring the *humus* of something that, at best, nourished the philosophical subsoil of some. And, strictly speaking, this quiet work, written long before the encyclical *Humani generis* and so much literature about the supernatural and the concept and application of natural law, represents my attempt to avoid hurling myself out there and taking the floor before first studying my own tradition in depth and becoming its disciple. I hope not to be taken amiss if, after preparing the springboard, I have embarked upon other philosophical and theological adventures.

This present re-edition does not represent the new work I would have liked to have written, but merely a revision of the earlier text without further additions. The other two works of the intended trilogy—the second on human nature and the third on the problem of the so-called supernatural—are still resignedly, although confidently, *in pectore*.

For an entire year I have doubted about whether or not to republish this work, since it does not correspond to what I now conceive. But I have done so for one sole philosophical reason: tradition is only overcome if it is left behind after being followed. Denying it, ignoring it, or fighting against it are the worst ways of being traditional. Only assimilation allows one to move forward without the load or the fear of what is past. Neither the mentality of the nouveau riche nor that of the converted are appropriate to a critical and mature philosophical stance. The best way of being "radical" is to not be afraid of our "roots." If they are once again exposed to the rain and to the sun, it is not merely to be exhibited or to be buried again, but rather to be grafted in a new earth and sky.

Harvard University  
Pentecost 1969

## THE MEANING OF THE PROBLEM OF NATURE

### Formulation

As Aristotle bluntly put it, many philosophers who discuss nature would do better if they actually looked at it in order to dissipate their ignorance.<sup>1</sup> Martínez de Ripalda, the long-winded seventeenth-century author of *De Ente Supernaturali*, complained about the same thing when facing those who heatedly discussed the supernatural without previously considering the concept of natural being—even if he himself was not too explicit in this sense.

Before Ripalda, St. Thomas had repeatedly acknowledged that for many questions it was first necessary to know what nature is;<sup>2</sup> and, more recently, it has again been recognized that many discussions—especially in theology—originate from the lack of a precise, basic concept of nature. And yet imprecision is not solved by merely becoming aware of it.

In truth, almost all theological problems are based on a prior concept of nature. The whole question of the existence, possibility, and knowability of miracles, the entire treatise on grace, and most “heresies”<sup>3</sup> are based on a given concept of nature. Moreover, it is needless to say that the relationship between nature and the supernatural, which is the base of the problem of the relationship between reason and faith, philosophy and theology, and the main question of Christian philosophy, entails previous knowledge of the first term of the equation.<sup>4</sup>

This disquisition is not only important for theology, but for all branches of philosophy, as in, for example, cosmology. Some modern works that have appeared on the topic of nature have turned to the cosmological problem in order to interpret the essence of the so-called natural sciences.

This is not exclusively a pretheological or cosmological problem, but rather first and foremost a metaphysical one. The concept of nature, in fact, extends to the entire sphere of Being and affects the very root of the nuclear problem of metaphysics. This is what we will attempt to see.

Accordingly, after a general description of the problem (chapter 1) we dedicate a chapter to gathering the maximum amount of data in order to avoid any a prioristic constructions and thus be able to consign, in a brief literal exegesis, the diverse meanings of the term in the world of culture, attempting to find their underlying sense (chapter 2). After this, we will be ready to turn to history in order to try to discover the real problem that the concept of nature has actually tried to solve (chapter 3).

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* I.8 (191b33).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, III, q.II, a.1.

<sup>3</sup> Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, Baianism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Jansenism, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Let us recall the commotion on the occasion of the encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Humanae vitae* (July 25, 1968), all of it based on a particular concept of nature and natural law.

Following this initial historical section, we elaborate the essential constitutive data of the real concept of nature (chapter 4) with the purpose of reaching the study of the fundamental concept (chapter 5). To complete the systematic section of our study, we then examine the primary manifestations of the very nature of nature itself. The concept of nature introduces us into a universe characterized by order, purpose, and love (chapter 6).

### Signification of the Question

This introductory chapter aspires to describe the very *signification* of the problem. More than investigating the *thing* we are searching for, it simply concentrates on the *meaning* and the reasons for this search, for this examination of nature. This is an important question, for, even if it is true that one may *philosophize* about anything, not all things possess the same sapiential wealth to exploit, and in this particular case, we are dealing with a fundamental line of human thought.

In fact, the problem of what nature is constitutes one aspect of the first metaphysical problem par excellence. In broad and general terms, the question of nature is the problem of the *being* and the *meaning of being*. All worldviews are linked in this problem, which is an essential component of the different philosophical systems.

The problem of nature merges with the inquiry into *reality*. Fundamentally, the problem of nature is nothing but the question of the *structure of reality*. It is not an accident that the first philosophical question raised by the Western mind was on nature. Philosophy is nothing but the complex answer to this simple question: *What are things?* A question that can be substituted by the following: *What constitutes the nature of things?*

Consequently, the concept of nature is just as much *determining* as it is *determined* within a philosophical system. This is why, on the one hand, it emerges as the most adequate manifestation of a philosophical system, and, on the other, it constitutes one of the fundamental concepts that most powerfully influences the construction of the same system. Thus, Kant's concept of nature is distinctive and, equally, all of Descartes's philosophy is nourished by his own concept of nature.

Hence the profound connection this topic has with that which constitutes the final cause of this study: the development of a theological anthropology. The philosophical principles of a system are undoubtedly implicit in its concept of nature, but this is again due to the fact that every conception of the world has forged its own concept of nature, which, in potency, contains the rest of the system. Now then, it seems that Christianity has intrinsically modified this concept, not only by using it to resolve the most important theological problems that revelation poses for the human mind—the Trinitarian, Christological, eucharistic problems, and that of grace—but also by making it the bearer of the essential dimension of the creatureliness of all things, a problem that we can only make reference to in passing here, as a complete discussion does not belong to this purely introductory work.

Let us recall, once and for all, that this study does not touch upon questions that are left to anthropology as well as to theology. Nowadays, a time when philosophical reflection is still in its critical and self-critical phase, this distinction seems a bit artificial; but perhaps some methodological reasons can still justify such an elaboration. Since the history of philosophy itself has followed this process, when it comes down to it, treating nature from a little less than a cosmological point of view actually follows the very same process that human thought has followed.

### The Beginning of Philosophizing

The question of nature reveals all of philosophy's main problems, in the first place because the unity of philosophy allows—and requires—that any one given problem be resolved by taking into account the outcome of many other problems.

But in the second place, because objectively, as we have already mentioned, the problem of nature is the problem of *being* and of its *meaning*. And furthermore, it is its first manifestation, both in history and in our own minds. Being, existence, substance, essence: here are some metaphysically charged concepts—and the path to any of them passes through nature.

Not only is change the first thing Man notices and admires, but it is only through variation, movement, activity that he can reach the permanent, the occult, that which is what is. This is why Man's first metaphysical questions are inevitably brought up in the question raised by the ultimate principle of these variations, changes, and movements, that is, in nature. The problem of nature—in its double meaning of *αρχή* and *κοσμος*<sup>5</sup>—is, thus, the beginning of philosophizing.

### "Modern" Philosophy

The question of nature is implicit or explicit in the dawn of any philosophy, and whatever answer it is given tints the philosophical system that is consequently constructed. Hence the importance of this problem for understanding philosophical trends; the radical differences between theistic realism of so-called perennial philosophy and what has come to be known as *modern* philosophy—which must not be confused with *current* philosophy—appear in all their coarseness in the concept of nature. This is the profound, constructive meaning of the problem of nature.

In most modern philosophical movements from Descartes to today, leaving theistic realism aside, the same—more or less latent—concept of nature prevails. It could be called a *nominalist* conception of nature.

Even if this study does not aspire to be so much critical as eminently constructive, it is nevertheless worthwhile to elucidate the problems of so-called *modern* philosophy a bit in order to properly place the issue and show its vitality and interest, not merely as a prior problem but even in itself.

The term *modern* applied to philosophy is not meant to illustrate its opposition to archaic philosophy, nor to signify the necessary and prevailing philosophy of our days; rather it uses a temporal, relative (and slightly untimely) word to name a specific philosophical attitude, which historically derives from the nominalism of the Middle Ages and even of antiquity, and begins with Descartes. What, however, distinguishes Descartes from the Middle Ages is the independence he claims toward theology.

At first, it abandons theology because of its "loftiness," and afterward it ignores it in its reconstruction of a system of ideas about Reality.<sup>6</sup> Modern philosophy is characterized by its separation from reason.<sup>7</sup> From there to its absolutization and deification (idealism), and to its dethronement and overcoming (irrationalism), there is but a step. Neglecting faith is

<sup>5</sup> "Principle" (of organization and understanding) and "universe."

<sup>6</sup> "Philosophia tractanda est nulla supernaturalis revelationis habita ratione" [philosophizing must be done without any reference to a supernatural revelation], says the fourteenth proposition condemned in the *Syllabus* (see Denz-Schön, § 1714).

<sup>7</sup> See my *Ontonomía de la Ciencia* (Madrid: Gredos, 1961), 41–62.

what ultimately brings about the splitting of Man and the birth of Modernity.<sup>8</sup>

Even if the "modern" philosophical movement is no longer very current, the name is maintained out of respect for the history of European thought, whose "modernism" is not yet fully overcome. This is why it is urgent for current philosophy, which has lost its subordination to theology, to find a positive limit to reason, as the principle of noncontradiction is a purely negative limit.<sup>9</sup> Human reason finds itself between two limits of intelligibility. "Potency"<sup>10</sup> belongs to the inferior limit of knowability: it is, in a certain sense, unknowable and it emerges as a hypothesis—a brilliant Aristotelian hypothesis—in order to make change intelligible. But it is a real, though infrarational, entity. Analogously, the individual is ineffable, but not less real because of it. But reason also possesses a positive suprarational limit, so that something inaccessible to reason can exist and not be contradictory because of it.

Moreover, once this superior sphere is open to reason, the latter can once again function in its formal aspect with this new, suprarationally acquired data—because it is not about lodging our reason in a watertight compartment, but rather about fertilizing our intellect with a higher principle.<sup>11</sup> It is about demonstrating the finiteness of reason, to thus philosophically justify the intervention of faith. This is again the problem of Christian philosophy, and it is Kant's initial, though frustrated, attempt to make some room for faith.<sup>12</sup>

From a philosophical point of view, this posture is recognized by the abandonment of the theory of the *analogy of being*, an inevitable consequence of the nominalist point of view. Therefore, without directly tackling the problems we have alluded to, we have to momentarily dwell on the classical and fundamental problem of "universals." Nature is not if not universal, because it is intimately connected to our intelligibility of things.

#### *"Deus Sive Natura"*<sup>13</sup>

Modern philosophy, whose roots are found in medieval nominalism and that begins its germinal explosion with Descartes—as it is already separated from theology in his thought—finds its first full manifestation in one of the most interesting philosophers of the past few centuries, whose importance was not recognized until long after his death: Spinoza. Certainly, Spinoza's pantheism has, implicitly or explicitly, had a decisive influence on modern philosophy.<sup>14</sup> And this pantheism is precisely what is formulated in the boldest dictum that has ever been expressed about nature: *Deus sive Natura*.

When modern philosophy separated itself from the faith that led it to God, it had to worry about reaching God with reason alone. And the relationship of the finite being with the infinite, which specifically crystallizes in the concept of nature, constitutes the pressing problem of modern philosophy. More than pressing, this problem is agonizing since, due to the separation between philosophy and theology, nature is the last bastion on which the entire consistency of the created being must rest in order to, on the one hand, allow for the

<sup>8</sup> See my *Cristianismo y Cristiandad*, where the problem here stated is developed.

<sup>9</sup> See chapter 1 of this section.

<sup>10</sup> In the Aristotelian sense of the word.

<sup>11</sup> This is one of the fundamental problems of the philosophy of the supernatural.

<sup>12</sup> See Kant's introduction to the second edition of his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.

<sup>13</sup> God, i.e., Nature.

<sup>14</sup> "The epitome of all errors about faith" is what the encyclical *Pascendi* calls pantheism.

leap to transcendence and, on the other, distinguish itself from Divinity itself. Leaving Man to himself, he is forced to play his last card in the structure of his own nature.

Spinoza's relationship with medieval tradition, through the Sephardi (Spanish Jewish) Scholastics of a predominant Arabic overtone, has already been pointed out. And this is precisely what places Spinozism in the same line as authentic systems of philosophy, and explains the tremendous influence exercised by his views—which are very consistent, once its general axioms have been accepted.

So the core of post-Cartesian philosophy is expressed in the audacious formula by the Dutch Jewish philosopher of Spanish origin. Spinoza did not ignore the distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, but he made the difference lie in the adjectives *naturans* and *naturata* rather than in the noun *natura*. This is where pantheism properly lies. The union of God with the world does not simply mean pantheism, since even in the Christian conception God is immanent to the world—and this conception is indeed not pantheist. Pantheism emerges when divine *natura* is confused with created *natura*. Its essence consists in not recognizing a nature that is really nature without being precisely God; in not admitting the existence of a true *finite nature*; or, what is the same, in not finding necessary an analogical concept of nature.

Not *Deus sive natura*, but rather *Deus et (finite) natura* exist in reality. But the idealism of the past four centuries of European philosophy, which persists to this day, cannot admit this multiplicity of subjects. For this philosophy, the Spirit certainly exists, but nothing can exist outside of the Spirit since it considers irrational the principle of individuation (that justifies a plurality of subjects). The only idealist posture that is internally consistent is the total, Absolute idealism, which ultimately coincides with the most radical solipsism. There can only be one Spirit, whether it is my own personal one or the absolute.

Parallel to Spinoza's enunciation, a pure idealist formulation that corroborates the reduction of everyone to a mere thought could be the following: *cogitatione cogitans* as absolute spirit, and *cogitatione cogitata* as its embodiment in the diverse human spirits. In both cases, *natura* is the only existing spirit, however the rest of the world is explained. Even if this interpretation of the universe is interpreted as a *naturation of natura*, it will always be the same subject that becomes *naturalized*. This is why the Spinozian existentialist pantheism is always, ultimately, an idealist interpretation of the world: the existence of all things that many idealist systems could, in their own way, essentially distinguish, is always the only one and the same, since it cannot be multiple, and furthermore it must possess the definite attributes of Being: it must be God.

The profound pantheism that exists, as we have said, as an implicit assumption of all of idealism, is not existentialist pantheism but rather essentialist pantheism. And the latter emerges from the incapacity to recognize a true finite nature, which can constitute the substantial nucleus of each being in particular without the need to dissolve in the only subsistent nature.<sup>15</sup> Existentialist pantheism would suppose a hypostatic universal union as a necessary requirement. But this would leave the plurality of *natures* unharmed.

<sup>15</sup> The analogy of being saves us from pantheism; but Christian affirmations are no less audacious because of it. See, for example, from Thomas Aquinas: "Omnis creatura naturaliter secundum id quod est, Dei est" (*Sum. theol.*, I, q.60, a.5: each creature, insofar as it naturally is, belongs to God). "Licet causa prima, quae Deus est, non intret essentiam rerum creaturarum; tamen esse quod rebus creates inest, non potest intelligi nisi ut deductum ab esse divino" (*De pot.*, q.3, a.5, ad 1: "Even though the First Cause, God, does not go into the essence of the created things, that being that is intrinsic to created things can only be conceived as drawn out of the Divine Being itself").

One should not confuse this monist stance with an *advaita*, or a-dualist, posture, which fully accepts the primacy of unity and the lack of consistency of all dualist considerations without falling into a monolithic and indiscriminate monism because of it. The two natures, *naturans* and *naturata*, are not on the same plane, they are not homogeneous, and this is why we cannot say that they are two, although we can neither affirm that they are one. God and the world are not "two," since there is nothing that can fill the content of this "two" without negating divine infinity itself. But neither are they "one," either conceptually, as is obvious, or in reality, since we have no right or possible criteria to negate reality to something that indisputably belongs to the reign of human experience as such.<sup>16</sup>

### Finite Nature

The problem is the following: in order for there to be *finite natures* against an *infinite nature*, the former must be, in the first place, authentic natures—that is, true principles of operation; namely, they must really be the causes of their actions. Without a causality of its own, we cannot speak of nature. However, understanding the univocal concept of *being* rigidly makes it impossible to distinguish the substantial nucleus of a being from its operations; therefore what is cause of its own operations is also *causa sui*.<sup>17</sup> This is precisely the definition that Spinoza gives of Divinity: a direct consequence of the Cartesian one.<sup>18</sup> In other words, in order for a being to be substantial—always in accordance with the proposed univocity of being—it must be in itself and be conceived by itself.<sup>19</sup> That is, it must be the *ens a se*, it must be God.

Second, these natures must be truly *finite*, that is, different from the infinite nature. And this is only possible if there is an ontological degradation that is not an obstacle for the ontic infinity of the Divinity. Finite nature presupposes, thus, an analogical conception of being. This is the great and lasting problem that was already heatedly debated in Greece in the question of whether being has to be one or multiple. Εν καὶ πολλαῖ, Plato will say;<sup>20</sup> τὸ δὲ οὐ λεγεται μεν πολλαχως, Aristotle will say.<sup>21</sup>

The doctrine of the univocity of being effectively leads to pantheism, since in the preaching of the *being* of God and of any other subject, the preaching is carried out with the same, complete comprehension in both cases, in such a way that both subjects identify with each other. But, in addition, the mere negation of the straight relationship of causality also leads to pantheism. In fact, pantheism can be defined as the doctrine that alters the cause-effect relationship in the God-world problem; either by exaggerating it, by making finite natures not possess the minimum causality with respect to their actions, so that there is only one nature; or by diminishing it, and thus giving the nature of things a total and full causality in their operations and letting them identify, insofar as each of them is *ens a se*, with the Divinity. In brief, pantheism identifies God with things, or things with God.

It is anyway clear that the ground is the same in both cases. If there is only one kind of

<sup>16</sup> In several publications I have tried to explain this doctrine more in depth. See, for example, my *Kerygma und Indien* (Hamburg, 1967), 112ff.

<sup>17</sup> The expression *αὐτὸν εἰστιν* dates back at least as far as Plotinus, *Enneads* V.8.14.

<sup>18</sup> "By substance we cannot mean anything else than that which exists in such a way that it does not need anything else" (Descartes, *Princip. Phil.*, I.51).

<sup>19</sup> "By substance I mean that which *is* in itself and is conceived by itself, i.e., whose concept does not need the concept of something else out of which it must be formed" (Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, def. 3).

<sup>20</sup> "The One and the many," in *Phileb.* 15D.

<sup>21</sup> "Being is predicated in many ways," *Met.* IV.2 (1003a33).

causality, with no distinction between first and second cause, finite natures will either be causes or they will not. If they are not, then there is only one sole nature, which is the divine nature, the exclusive and universal cause of everything. If they are themselves causes, they will be subsistent in themselves and will possess the attributes of divinity in their own right, which means they become mere manifestations of God. In both cases there is pantheism—when it is not atheism.

F. H. Jacobi<sup>22</sup> was right when he said that, ultimately, Spinozism was pure atheism, despite Goethe's objections. And yet, it is the same Jacobi who, condemning Spinoza's doctrine while, at the same time, admiring it and, above all, venerating its author, will trigger its expansion in the philosophical world. The nineteenth century likes Spinoza because his pantheism allows them to speak of God without having to adore Him as a personal, distinct Being.

It may seem that this same problem should be considered in regard to substance. But in that case the question, though the same, would be less universal, since ultimately what is being discussed is the consistency, or, in other words, the substantiality of nature. Nature is primary.

We must then show that the concept of "finite nature" is not contradictory. And more than that, that it is the foundation of a theist philosophy, as a *personal* relationship with God is only possible if this concept is saved.

### The Meaning of Historical Evolution

This is the same problem that the history of philosophy has been asking itself regarding nature. Although this connection has not always been considered—as the relationship of the finite with the infinite was—within a general set of problems, it has always been the real problem latent in any secular search for nature.

A comprehensive vision of the gestation of the problem could be summarized as follows: the pre-Socratics believe that nature is *αρχή* (a "principle") and that, as it is unique—and in many cases possesses divine attributes—it is incumbent on it to be the cause. Only one cause is known, and little by little, others are introduced. Plato senses the existence of the four classic causes, but with little precision, and specifically the formal one is interpreted in a somewhat artificial manner: the *παρουσία* (presence) of the idea in the thing. Aristotle classifies the four causes and makes the formal one more intelligible. This is no longer considered a *παρουσία*, but rather a true *οὐσία*, a substance—whether complete or incomplete—which is the form of the thing in a given matter. But the relationship with the Absolute remains somewhat obscure. There is some contact with the immobile Mover, which, on the other hand, wants to be timidly transcendent, and which moves all things by virtue of their longing for It; but there is still a shapeless and eternal matter that limits these forms, and whose dependence on the First Motor is left pretty unclear. We can thus understand Aquinas's later, genuine continuation of Aristotle, and at the same time his profound modifications attained by introducing the divine creation of matter and of forms into the system, as well as the real—although participated and limited by potency—actuality of all forms against the Pure Act. How can we explain the real actuality of forms, in regard to Pure Act, since they participate in the latter while at the same time they are different from it?

It goes without saying that this is the crucial problem of many scholastic disputes. The classic controversy about the distinction between essence and existence is not a Byzantinism, rather it represents the diversity of conceptions about the peculiarity of the created being—and this is the reason it contains such passion and ardor in itself.

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<sup>22</sup> See his *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 1785.

The Infinite is the final, exemplary, and efficient cause of the finite nature, but not the material nor the formal cause. The finite nature possesses its own formality in such a way that, although dependent on God, its operations lie in itself. Christianity's introduction of the concept of creation attempts to resolve this extraordinary problem, which already appeared in Greece, and which St. Thomas will later take up in an adequately philosophical manner.

An in-depth study of pantheism or of creation is not incumbent here—but we must point out their relationship, both to each other as well as to the main theme of this study. Both subjects ultimately refer to the interpretation of the ultimate *nature* of being. One solution to the aporias of a nature that is consistent with itself and possesses certain endurance of its own but is at the same time contingent is the idea of creation. And the result of creation is the *nature* of the created being.

Analogously, the discussion between nominalism and realism, which constitutes one of the "perennial problems" of philosophy, and which is thoroughly tied to the problem of pantheism, also culminates in the concept of nature.

In fact, an exaggeratedly realistic interpretation seems to lead to pantheism, not only historically but also logically—since, by convening the most amount of being possible to the *ens realissimum* and gradually diminishing, by rigorous order of generality, species and genres will be authentic *theophanies* in a simultaneously logical and metaphysical pantheism because they will be mere realizations of the same divine substance. If the species (for example, humanity and irrationality) are real entities with an existence that is distinct and independent of individuals, the latter will only be able to be a participation of those superior substances. But the same can be said of species in regard to genres, and so on, until we reach the concept of Being, subsistent and unique.

But on the other hand, an exaggerated nominalism also has the seed of pantheism in its kernel, since things cannot be consistent and possess an authentic reality, and especially, activity, if they are not directly connected—since there is no intermediary—with God. This relation can be none other than a *univocal* participation of the Divinity—since *analogy* supposes a certain conceptualism, at least.

It should now be clear that the same exact problem arises in a very special way in Man, whose actuality comes with freedom. This very thing was at stake in the question of his supernatural elevation, with the classical discussion *de auxiliis* to delimit what belongs to us and what we owe to God. The great theological controversies on predestination, divine science, and so on find their philosophical core here. What is the role of our nature, in all of its aspects, in face of the nature of the noncreated Being? What autonomy is incumbent on it, and how can this be explained when facing the causality of the *ens a se*? The entire set of problems of the *ab alio* being ultimately lie in its nature. How can one explain the responsibility, the vitality, the movement and the evolution of the created being?

The pressing philosophical problem of most of today's systems also consists in finding an explanation for the finite and limited being, especially for Man in his concrete individuality.

### The Metaphysical "Charge"

Finally, the problem of nature accounts for one of philosophy's great preoccupations: the dynamism of being.

"Spirit," "history," "existence," and "evolutionism" are four terms that constantly emerge in our present-day culture as points of convergence of a philosophical life. Now then, these concepts, with the full charge that they properly and improperly carry, speak of a relationship to a determined idea of nature.

Ideas, not as logical artifacts, but insofar as they incarnate in Men and act within a culture, like everything that lives in the temporal world, grow old and degenerate. We need a reinvigoration, a rejuvenation of aged metaphysical concepts that, having been tampered with by those who are incapable of piercing their depths, have become empty and ridiculous puppets. Something similar has happened to the concept of nature. Slowly, the vitality and ripeness of this concept degenerated into an ankylosed and sclerotic idea, incapable of accounting for and of channeling the growing postmedieval philosophical preoccupation.

Precisely because of this, because of denying a decadent idea of nature, philosophical reflection disregarded nature when it should have stressed the dynamic and spontaneous aspect of beings, and especially of Man. Modern terminology is indebted to this phenomenon when it affirms that Man "has no nature, but only history," that the spirit is essentially opposed to nature, that evolutionism denies the consistency of a dead and static idea of nature. The static dimension of being represented by nature has been opposed to the mobile and live reality of history and of the spirit. Curious dichotomy, that of Man who, in order to affirm himself, believes he must alienate himself from the world—and from nature.

So we intend to show that the correct understanding of the concept of nature provides an authentic philosophical base for a dynamic assessment of being, without damaging its necessary static dimension.

A typical example of what we have been saying is provided by the old and current concepts of existence. We can say that existence is "the act of essence," but this formulation must be well understood. Existence is not, for the created being, essence in act, since it is not the proper act of essence, but rather an extrinsic act (real distinction) that puts essence into existent reality. By existence, an essence acts and exists, and this existential actuation is precisely the nature of the created being.

Nature is astride between essence and existence; it is its real synthesis in each existing thing. A pure essence has no nature and neither does the pure act of existing in the created world. Only the real being, made up of essence and existence, has nature. Thus nature, on the one hand, informs us of the essence of every being and, on the other, of its peculiar form of existence. The stillness of essence and the actuality of existence are joined in *each* being in the dynamism of nature. Nature is the specific existence of each being; the concrete essence exists according to its peculiar way of being.<sup>23</sup>

The revaluation of this ancient philosophical concept allows us to fertilize current thought without having to sever ties with tradition out of a certain pride.

This is the great problem that we have set out, not to solve, but rather to present.

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<sup>23</sup> This paragraph will have to be modified by taking the trinitary and Christological considerations of the announced theology of nature into consideration.

## 2

## HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: THE DIVERSE MEANINGS OF “NATURE”

Since we are not trying to create our own system based on an a prioristic definition of nature, before undertaking the systematic aspect of the problem we must first present a historical chapter. We then need to unearth the nucleus of observations that make up the fundamental and fundamental meaning of this concept as of its history and use. For this, we must ask the history of philosophy what it has understood by “nature” throughout time.

The answer to this question constitutes the object of the following chapter, because it is first necessary to pose an exclusively erudite question that limits itself to investigating the different meanings of this word in the world of culture.

As we cannot take a critical stance until we have exactly specified the object under discussion—and as, on the other hand, there are preceding problems that imply that we must establish an entire general philosophical system before being able to tackle one particular issue (something that is certainly necessary in order to tackle it, but not in order to expose it)—this chapter simply presents brief dissection of the main meanings that this word has adopted, in order to be able to later extract the fundamental meaning needed for the subsequent part of the investigation.

It would be relatively easy to establish a theoretical principle of division and to classify the diverse meanings of “nature” within it; but this would be nothing more than a dialectical display. Instead, in our systematic section, we try to extract the fundamental meaning of the concept from its multiple significations, something that is only possible after having adopted a previous stance, that is, from an acknowledged perspective. Furthermore, when studying the evolution of this concept throughout the history of philosophy—even if it is only done roughly—we achieve a particular order that allows us to establish certain internal connections in the enumeration of the diverse meanings that are exposed in following pages.

A certain irregularity can be noticed in the attention we devote to the different meanings we analyze; but we must bear in mind that developing these significations to the full would not represent an investigation, but rather a *Summa scientiarum* that would have to consider all beings, from the widest generalization to the most idiosyncratic individuation. What we are interested in here is obtaining a formal framework for the different meanings, only developing those that will later be useful in our subsequent investigation.

### Birth

The first meaning of “nature” belongs in its own right to the etymological sense that I discuss later and that, beginning with Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> is ceaselessly repeated, sometimes in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics* V.4 (1014b16).

exact same words as in previous authors. The term naturally comes from "birth," and thus it means nativity, the generation of the living.<sup>2</sup>

This sense of *γένεσις*, birth—and also growth, as is the proper meaning of *φύομαι*—according to some, is already found in one episode in Homer.<sup>3</sup> But this interpretation is not absolutely necessary; it may even seem a bit forced, since it refers to the power or virtue of a plant.<sup>4</sup>

This occurs analogously with Empedocles, for even if Diels<sup>5</sup> translates *φύσις* as *Entstehung*<sup>6</sup> both in fragment 8 quoted by Aristotle<sup>7</sup> as well as in fragment 63, Ross<sup>8</sup> points out that its exact signification is nature as permanent and substantial in the first sense and as substance in the second, much like, on the other hand, Burnet<sup>9</sup> observes in the interpretation given by Plutarch,<sup>10</sup> who identifies *φύσις* with *γένεσις*. We must point out that, in any given translation, this *φύσις* is always something permanent and constant, not subject to death. Empedocles's lesson amounts to this: there is no *φύσις* of what is perishable as such.

Despite Ross's opinion—which may, otherwise, be historically correct—that Aristotle recognizes the etymological meaning of nature even if his use of it seems purely artificial, this sense maintains an intimate relationship with the rest of the meanings, as we will see. There is no reason to deny Aristotle full consciousness of this signification, which concurs, not only in the later tradition, but also in Plato<sup>11</sup> himself as well as in Aristotle's<sup>12</sup> own writings in various places, and is in perfect harmony, in other respects, with his *hylozoist*<sup>13</sup> vision of the universe. Birth is the ultimate root of all mutation, and furthermore, all of nature consists in this mutation, which, according to this meaning, is primitively applied to living beings.<sup>14</sup> But this sense is soon further specified, and from simply meaning nativity it goes on to mean that which makes things be born, and with this we turn to the second meaning.

### Principle of Generation

Nature is the vital principle. If "nature," in the first sense we have presented, has the power to produce and generate,<sup>15</sup> it is because it possesses in itself this generating principle, which is what will properly be called "nature"; in fact, we can say that something possesses nature if it possesses this principle of generation, already defined in Aristotle<sup>16</sup> and, along with him,

<sup>2</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.19, a.1, ad 4

<sup>3</sup> *Odyssey* X.302–3.

<sup>4</sup> Hermes gives Ulysses a drug that, by means of its *φύσις*, will help him resist Circe's magical force, which has turned his companions into pigs.

<sup>5</sup> *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin, 1906).

<sup>6</sup> *Origin.*

<sup>7</sup> *Met.* V.4 (1015a1).

<sup>8</sup> *Aristotle's Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 2 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924), with reference to *Met.* 1014b17 (V.4).

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by Ross.

<sup>10</sup> *Adverus Colotem* 1112A.

<sup>11</sup> *Leg.* 892C.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., in *Phys.* 193b12.

<sup>13</sup> Meaning that matter has a principle of life in itself.

<sup>14</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (192b9–11).

<sup>15</sup> "Natura dicta ab eo quod *nasci* aliquid faciat. Gignendi et faciendi potens est" [Nature is said to be that which causes something to be born. It is the power of giving birth and making] (Isidore, *Etymologies* XI.1 [PL 82.397]).

<sup>16</sup> *Met.* V.4 (1014b17).

in the rest of tradition. In generation, the nature of the generating being is communicated to the generated being. The former gives the latter something, and this something that it gives it—which will allow the generated being to, in turn, become a generating being—is precisely nature as principle of generation, as vital principle.

This meaning of nature, as we have presented it, is justified by Aristotle himself, as we have already mentioned, because, even if the adduced text strictly says that nature is where growth begins, it has always been interpreted in the way we have indicated here as, in fact, the classical Latin translation also proves.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, this settles a problem that Ross faces when—considering that the essence of nature is being the principle of movement *ἐν αὐτῷ* (as Aristotle himself states in order to differentiate it from *art*<sup>18</sup>)—he says that it is an error of Aristotle to regard generation as “nature,” something that the philosopher states categorically.

But in the interpretation we give here, Aristotle’s text can be perfectly saved, since the child has the same nature as the father because the latter has generated the former, the latter has communicated his own vital principle, that is, his nature, since the generated receives the nature of the generating. Thus, the Aristotelian affirmation that nature is the intrinsic principle (*ἐν αὐτῷ*) is not contradicted, as nature here is not the *φύσις* of the generating being, but rather the generating principle. It is I who generates through a vital act of my own (*ab intra*) even when the end of such an act is the production of a new being and it does not fall back on myself, as is the case with growth, for example. What is essential here is that the *a quo* principle of movement resides in the moving (generating) being even if the *ad quem* term falls back on another. My acts and actions are natural when they come from myself, even if they fall on another. Nature implies intrinsic principle of action, even if this is transient. Intrinsic principle does not imply immanent action. And the generated being can be said to be of the same nature as the generating being if the latter’s nature has truly been communicated to it. In this way, we can perfectly explain the Aristotelian texts without having to resort to assuming an equal specific nature between the father and the child, because this is the case for all humans,<sup>19</sup> nor do we have to carry out forced exegetical disquisitions.

In this sense, then, nature may be understood either in an absolute manner with regard to everything living, even to all beings in general, or with regard to every living being in particular. The first case points to a supreme principle of generation, to a single and total *ἀρχή* in the pre-Socratic sense, which gives way to the third sense of nature: God. In the second case, we face the fourth meaning (see below).

### God (*Natura Naturans*)

It is interesting to note that in the already classic deduction of the five senses that Aristotle<sup>20</sup> finds in the word “nature” and in the countless commentaries to his *Metaphysics*, this sense of Nature as God is nowhere to be found. On the other hand, later on, many of his interpreters will admit it as a correct sense of nature<sup>21</sup> since, besides being a logical deduc-

<sup>17</sup> *Met.* V.4: “Natura vero dicitur uno quidem modo nascentium generatio” [Nature means the genesis of growing things].

<sup>18</sup> *Met.* XI.3 (1070a7), and see *Phys.* 198a35; 192b27. Thus, since a house is not produced by another house, but rather by the *form* of a house, the *form* can be called nature.

<sup>19</sup> *Met.* I.3 (1070a7, 8).

<sup>20</sup> *Met.* V.4.

<sup>21</sup> “Natura vero universalis est virtus activa in aliquo universali principio naturae. . . . Secundum quod etiam Deus a quibusdam dicitur natura naturans” [The universal nature is a power acting in some universal principle of nature. . . . This is why God is called *natura naturans* by some authors] (Thomas

tion of the previous meaning, it possesses a tradition as old as that of the meanings that have already been mentioned.<sup>22</sup> And the explanation is perhaps found in the general character of those who like to use—and sometimes abuse—this expression; of those authors who, by all their means, attempt to reduce the distance and separation between the Creator and creation: mystics, pantheists, idealists, and so on. God as *natura naturans* appears to be closer to *natura naturata* than the immobile Motor (or the *ens a se*) of moved beings (*ens ab alio*).

This is the reason why this is the preferred expression of all systems that tend to reduce the distance between the supreme principle, maker of all things, and the things themselves once produced.<sup>23</sup> These expressions are found in Johannes Scotus Eriugena, Lorenzo Valla, Giordano Bruno, Francis Bacon, Baruch Spinoza, and others, and we also find the same predilection for these expressions in idealist tendencies of all nuances: Schopenhauer, Schelling, Hegel, and so on. The mystics, like Nicholas of Cusa, Meister Eckhart, and so on, frequently call God both "nature" and "creator of nature," without it always being easy to know whether they maintain the distinction between both natures, creating and created, or not.

If nature is, thus, the generating principle of things, one may ask about the supreme principle, which is *summa natura*, as St. Anselm would say, or *natura naturans*, as Averroes<sup>24</sup> seems to have been the first to introduce, without it necessarily identifying with the produced things. If nature is "the power to make and to generate," God is properly the true nature of things, as He is the first principle of every operation.

Eliminating the pantheistic threat of these expressions, the realist Christian philosophers did not doubt in fully accepting this meaning of the word "nature."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, I believe in the fourth chapter I can prove that the genuine sense of "nature" in all the Scholastics is precisely founded on *this* meaning.

### Intrinsic Principle of Activity

If the second meaning of nature—as principle of generation—is not absolutized so as to consider it the ultimate principle of all genesis, but we anyway abstract the peculiar character of the change called "birth," a new sense of nature as *intrinsic* principle (this is essential to the principle of generation) of change<sup>26</sup> appears. Strictly speaking, generation is nothing but a change in which one can see the process of this mutation more clearly than in other changes, because it becomes patently clear that the variation is due to an internal principle of the same being that produces the generation.<sup>27</sup>

It is well known that until the appearance of the phenomenal concept of movement as mere translation in the nominalist physics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, all change was understood as movement, adopting the Aristotelian definition of the latter as "transition from potency to act."<sup>28</sup> They did nothing but faithfully interpret (although each

Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q. 85, a. 6, c.).

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Plato, *De Legibus*; Seneca, *De Officiis* IV; Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*; Lactanctius, *Instit. Div.* II.9; III.28; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XII.2; *De Trin.*, XV.1.

<sup>23</sup> Spinoza, *Eth.* I, prop. 29, *schol.*

<sup>24</sup> *Comm. ad De Coelo* I.1. On the origin and history of this term, see H. Siebeck, "Über die Entstehung der Termine *natura naturans* und *natura naturata*," *Archiv. f. Gesch. des Phil.* 3 (1890): 370ff.

<sup>25</sup> St. Augustine calls God "ea natura quae creavit omnes naturas" [that nature that created all natures] in *De Trin.* XIV.9; and St. Thomas follows him entirely. See *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.67, a.1, c.

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* V.4 (1014b18–20).

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.29, a.1, ad 4.

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* 201a10.

author with his own conceptions of act and potency) the entire set of problems surrounding the variations of beings that the Greeks put forth. Thus, we may call "nature" the intrinsic principle at which the pre-Socratics arrived: the φύσις which they anxiously inquired about. Nature is that which explains change in the world because it is its principle, even if there are cosmological discussions about *which* principle this is.

In this sense, Aristotle defines nature as a certain principle and cause of movement and rest in that to which it belongs primarily and in itself, not by accident.<sup>29</sup> Or, in a more literal translation, "nature is the principle and cause of movement and of rest for the thing in which it immediately resides and by way of essential attribute, and not accidental, of this thing."

After this definition, Aristotle lists the features that properly belong to generation,<sup>30</sup> where it is specified that that which is born is always connected to its generator and that, therefore, since what is essential is constituting an internal principle of movement, the concept can be extended to any intrinsic principle, as St. Thomas rightly points out.<sup>31</sup>

Hence the dynamic character of the concept of nature. Nature is always related to movement,<sup>32</sup> and since the classical concept of "movement" can be translated by our current concept of "activity," it is fitting to formulate this sense of nature as intrinsic principle of activity, or simply as *principle of activity*, as this last word already denotes—mainly—an internal dynamism.

Hence, also, the difference between the natural and the artificial, since the modification introduced by art is purely extrinsic<sup>33</sup>—though without excluding that nature also can introduce accidental modifications.

This sense is fundamental, and the following four meanings will emerge according to which thing is considered the principle of movement.

### The Subject of All Change (Matter)

Nature is the universal *substratum* of all change, that is, the inalterable subject of all variation, that which remains. Now then, that which remains, materially speaking, is *matter*,<sup>34</sup> which will be increasingly *prime* the less material it is. This is why the informed matter that the pre-Socratics consider nature<sup>35</sup> becomes *prime matter* in Aristotle;<sup>36</sup> and from being the material substance—or the material elements—from which the world is constituted, it becomes "the first subject"<sup>37</sup> of those things that in themselves possess the principle of movement and change."<sup>38</sup>

But in both senses (Aristotle's modification consists only in spiritualizing the excessively material sense of the pre-Socratics), matter is nature because it is a principle of movement, insofar as that which *is* or is made emerges from it as from its passive principle. In generation

<sup>29</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (192b20).

<sup>30</sup> *Met.* V.4 (1014b21–27).

<sup>31</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.29, a.1, ad 4.

<sup>32</sup> In this sense, the definition that Nicholas of Cusa gives is very characteristic: "Natura est quasi complicatio omnium quae per motum fiunt" [Nature is like the co-implication of all things taking place through motion] (*De Docta Ignorantia* II.10).

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In II Phys.*, lect. 14.8.

<sup>34</sup> *Met.* V.4 (1014b26–27).

<sup>35</sup> See *Phys.* II.1 (193a10ff.); *Met.* I.4 (993b8).

<sup>36</sup> *Met.* V.4 (1015a7–8).

<sup>37</sup> In the Latin meaning of *subjectum*: "that which lies at bottom," substrate.

<sup>38</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (193a28).

you also need an agent and matter.<sup>39</sup> We are not here interested in emphasizing the distinction we pointed out between the two concepts of matter—prime matter and secondary matter—but rather what they both have in common insofar as they are nature because they are substrate of movement. Apparently, prime matter is not the original meaning of Aristotle's φύσις, but rather the matter that is the direct subject of a form, as it is proven by the examples he adduces of the wood for the bed and the bronze for the statue.<sup>40</sup> And if in the aforementioned passage of the *Metaphysics*<sup>41</sup> he speaks of the πρώτη υλή, it appears to be, most likely, an afterthought<sup>42</sup> since in the parallel, previous passage<sup>43</sup> he only said εξ ου πρώτον,<sup>44</sup> and it is confirmed by other examples.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, Simplicius, in his commentary,<sup>46</sup> interprets matter in relation to nature as prime matter, the last material constituent of beings. That is to say, for Aristotle, πρώτον would be *near* and for Simplicius, *first*. Nevertheless, Aristotle admits both meanings explicitly<sup>47</sup> (we must not forget that, according to pre-Socratics, water as *αρχή* can possess the attributes of Aristotle's prime matter) and really both of them are closely or remotely subjects of movement, and in this sense, like the invariable element in regard to change, they can be called nature. This is the Aristotelian solution: prime matter as remote subject and "in-formed" matter as nearby subject can be considered nature.

### Form

But, if nature is the immobile principle of movement, that is, what remains, and if matter is what remains considered from a material point of view, the *form* also remains, if we consider this from an "idealistic" perspective. The bronze from the statue, seen from below, whether the statue has been destroyed or is in ruins, remains as much as the immortal form of the same, seen from above, from a spiritual point of view. The Aristotelian synthesis of considering both matter (pre-Socratics) and form (Plato) as the φύσις constitutive of things is precisely one of the most brilliant moments of his philosophy.

Thus, if the principle of movement is considered *actively*, as something which, when communicating with something else, moves it, changes it, nature will also be the *form*, since movement is caused more by form than by matter.<sup>48</sup>

The form, in this sense, will more properly be nature by displacing matter and relegating it—insofar as prime—to being a mere passive principle. Form will thus be the perfection and fulfillment of nature, and matter its beginning. Consequently, something will be said to have such a nature if it possesses such a form.

Up to this point, the different meanings attributed to nature are very clear and distinct from each other. But the following meaning we present is in a certain way already implied in this last meaning, even though it is, notwithstanding, possible to establish a sufficiently clear logical distinction between them.

<sup>39</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.1, a.7, ad 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (193a12).

<sup>41</sup> 1015a7.

<sup>42</sup> See Ross's comments on *Met.* 1015a7.

<sup>43</sup> 1914b27.

<sup>44</sup> "Out of which, first of all."

<sup>45</sup> See again Ross.

<sup>46</sup> *Comm. in Met.* 273.20–34.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In V Met.* lect. 5 (819).

In his *Physics*,<sup>49</sup> Aristotle speaks of nature as form in a special sense, even if he adds the word ειδος<sup>50</sup> as an afterthought. On the other hand, in his *Metaphysics*<sup>51</sup> he includes two meanings in only one, as when speaking of form he refers to the substantial form and more specifically to the essence of things. Thus there are three meanings that must be separated in any initial, purely dialectical analysis, although later we may find that two of them correspond to the same reality and identify with each other (*materialiter*).

"The form is, thus, nature."<sup>52</sup> And this form (μορφη) is the original Aristotelian form through which the essence (ειδος) is reached, since the latter is configured in a form (μορφη) that is precisely its *sign*.<sup>53</sup> Μορφη is the manipulation of ειδος. That is, *nature is the potency of essence*. It is important to retain this meaning. Then, accordingly, in the same way that we call "artificial" the element that conforms to art and to technique that things possess, we call "natural" that which they have in them that conforms to nature.<sup>54</sup> And this nature is, precisely, the form, since a thing is not itself until it has received its form. As we do not call bed what is only a bed in potency, flesh and bone do not possess the nature of flesh and bone until they have received the form of flesh or bone.<sup>55</sup>

It is important to distinguish these two meanings of form completely in order to understand Aristotle, and even more, to understand tradition. On the one hand, it means the "substantial form" in the Scholastic sense. This form, ειδος, is for Aristotle the substitute of Platonic ideas. And, on the other hand, the form, μορφη, exists in the sense of the external figure or configuration of a thing, which is the first effect of the form (in the first sense) on matter in material beings. Let us also recall the Aristotelian theory of numbers and geometric figures (forms).

### Essence

Yet this form (figure) is nothing but the sign of essence, and the essence of things is precisely what gives them their own nature, that way of being that makes them an active subject of movement. This is why form always refers to essence, and the two are not separable except by reason.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, since the form completes the essence of any given thing (since we cannot apprehend essence if it is not through form), it will also be called "nature," and it will be contained in that in which essence is contained, that is, in the definition. This is why nature has been understood, since Boethius, as the specific difference in the scale of beings.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>49</sup> II.1 (193a30; 193b21).

<sup>50</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (193a30).

<sup>51</sup> V.4 (1014b34; 1015a19).

<sup>52</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (193b21).

<sup>53</sup> With admirable precision, St. Thomas helps us to distinguish between these diverse meanings when, in interpreting and reenacting Aristotle's thought, he says, "Videtur autem...poni...forma pro figura quae consequitur speciem, et est signum speciei" [We also see that form is indicated as the figure following the species, and it is the very sign of the species] (*In V Met. lect. 5* [820]).

<sup>54</sup> *Phys.* loc. cit.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Plato's disciple is always mindful that his doctrine may not be confused with his master's. This is why he specifies that he does not mean the separated Platonic ideas (ειδος): *Phys.* 193b4.

<sup>57</sup> "Natura est unamquamque rem informans specifica differentia," Boethius, *De Duab. Nat.* (beginning).

There is also a direct connection between this meaning and the primary etymological meaning, given that the product of natural generation consists in the generated, and this is precisely the essence of the thing which will constitute that according to which the thing is what it is, and that it will later be able to communicate to its descendants. In a certain sense, then, we can say that essence is the end of generation.

This is the ordinary (already Aristotelian)<sup>58</sup> meaning when speaking of the *nature of things*, both in general and in particular. A meaning that must not be confused with the essence of things, even though it may primarily refer to it, since "nature" refers to the essence insofar as it is an intrinsic principle of movement, that is, of operations. Essence possesses a more static character. If, when considered in relation to existence, it is that whose act is existence, and in relation to our intellect it is the definition or *quiddity* of the thing, with regard to the operations of being the essence meets the requirements to be called "nature." This is the most extended definition of nature both in tradition as well as at present,<sup>59</sup> even though essence can also be understood, in a phenomenological sense, as the set of properties that define a being, or in a traditional sense.

This meaning is susceptible of a double consideration. Until now, we have been increasingly broadening the concept by abstracting some of its nonessential attributes. There is still room for broadening the base. If we bear in mind that, according to this last meaning, we can call any essence "nature," we can also call any being "nature," since any being is such because of its essence. Another option is to begin to limit this generalization, considering that, both because of what we have here understood as essence up until now as well as because of the deductions we have made, we are dealing with the essence of substances—all the more since accidents do not properly possess essence and all the metaphysical interest is concentrated in the substance.

This is how the following two meanings emerge.

### Being (in General)

In the first of the above-mentioned interpretations, nature is understood as a synonym of being.<sup>60</sup> This meaning reveals a certain similarity with the meaning of Nature as God. The latter, however, lays emphasis on the *ens realissimum* or *ens a se*, and the former on the *ens simpliciter*. The anonymous writer of the glosses to *De Natura Rerum* of the Venerable Bede considers nature as the ensemble of existing beings, both visible and invisible, both the Creator Being as well as the created things.<sup>61</sup> This meaning crossed the whole history of philosophy, and many of the connotations—of a more restricted extension—of everyday language come from this: "nature" as a synonym of everything that exists, even more, of everything that can be thought.

An interesting passage in Aristotle speaks of the *one* nature that analogous beings possess.<sup>62</sup> Here nature would refer to that *unum aliquid et idem*<sup>63</sup> that is required for the metaphysical

<sup>58</sup> See for example *Met.* I.2 (983a20).

<sup>59</sup> See entry "Natur" in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*.

<sup>60</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.10, a.1: "Alio modo dicitur natura quaelibet substantia, vel quodlibet ens" [In a different sense, any substance or being is called "nature"].

<sup>61</sup> See PL 90.187.

<sup>62</sup> *Analyt. Post.* II.14.

<sup>63</sup> "One and the same" (Thomas Aquinas, *In IV Met. lect. 1* [535]).

analogy, as is explicitly stated in another place<sup>64</sup> and followed by St. Thomas.<sup>65</sup> Everything would have a similar nature insofar as they are beings. The being and its "transcendentals" coincide in the nature of *being*. This is the broadest sense of the concept.

### Substance

The second interpretation, which we already mentioned, of essence as nature comes from considering nature in its sense of substance. This sense holds great importance and it is directly connected to the most ancient tradition. The *αρχή* that the pre-Socratics were looking for was not a logical being but rather an *ousia*, something very real, like the natural baggage that Man possesses that allows him to act according to his possibilities. In everyday Greek language, substance was this, it was the trousseau that each individual possessed, his baggage, the solid and real part of his estate.

Much has been said about this meaning of the word "nature." Here we only wish to point to its existence, without going further in depth into a more complete explanation, which we do in chapter 4.

If the *αρχή* that was sought must have the characteristics of substance, and the *αρχή* was also, as we have seen, the epitome of nature, it is logical that substance also be called nature. And this seems to be precisely Aristotle's idea when, after having defined nature and explained its definition, he adds, "Now then, all these things are substances."<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, it turns out that not only the things on which it is incumbent to be "natures" are substances, but rather that substance as such is—strictly speaking—nature since being principle belongs to it by its own right, as well as being physical and metaphysical principle, that is, principle of change and of being. Aristotle's conclusion will thus be that every substance is nature, since nature itself is a certain kind of substance.<sup>67</sup> Substance is nature as an imperishable principle of activity.

This meaning is not only related to the meaning of nature as principle in movement, but it also has a direct connection with the etymological meaning of the term. If matter and form are called "nature" by virtue of being principles of generation, substance will also be able to be called by the same name, as it is the goal of generation.<sup>68</sup> Generation consists precisely in producing another substance of the same nature (of the same substance) as the generating being.

This meaning can also be related to the one of form we have already pointed out: the total or substantial form can in fact be identified with the substantial essence since, because of it, substance is what it is. Strictly speaking, the *forma totius* is certainly *substance*, but, to be more precise, we must point out that it is the second substance. Aristotle goes into even greater detail by saying that nature is species and substance, and we do not say that something possesses a nature if it does not have species and form.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> "Something unique and identical," as Aristotle calls the Being and the One in *Met.* III.2.

<sup>65</sup> *IV Met.* lect. 1 (536).

<sup>66</sup> *Fis.* II.1 (192b33).

<sup>67</sup> *Met.* V.4 (1015a11), where both can be converted into each other. This reveals that "nature" means "second substance," as we will see.

<sup>68</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* V.4 (1015a9). *Species* and *substantia* coincide in that they are *second substances*. This is the characteristic of nature.

<sup>69</sup> *Met.* V.4 (1915a4, 5).

All this points to an even more serious problem that we will tackle shortly. For now, it is enough to retain that substance, in all its amplitude of first and second, may also be used as an equivalent to nature.

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Up to this point we have been operating on a very general level; we have been able to call nature any *principle* of the totality of things, as principle of generation, as formal principle, as material principle, principle of being, and so on. We have mentioned the different types of principles that the whole can have. We can now limit ourselves to the second member of the more general proposition defining nature as the *principle of everything*. Up to now, we have diversified the *principle*; now we must limit the *everything*. And in this limitation, the meanings can be multiplied arbitrarily. We will, thus, gradually limit the extension of the concept by reducing the spheres whose peculiar principle could be called nature.

It may be that some senses hold great similarity to others we have already discussed; but the point of view will be totally different. Thus, for example, the following meaning ("everything created") could be confused with one discussed earlier ("essence") in certain aspects, since, if a meaning is only valid within certain limits, we can then reach the same concept either by considering this principle's differential characteristics or by limiting ourselves to the field for which only this concept is valid.

### Everything Created

The first limitation of the *everything* (see above) consists in dividing it by the greatest of the differences that being presents: created and uncreated, *a se* and *ab alio*. Nature would then be all of creation, everything that has come of God's creating power; it will be *natura naturata*. In this sense, we speak of nature as everything that exists and of Mother Nature as the entire creation. This meaning, on the other hand, is not at all far from the primitive etymological sense, as can easily be deduced from the very expression *natura naturata* that has been adopted to designate it.

The expression *rerum natura* has become a classic one in medieval philosophy, used to designate the real existence of things in the world. We already find this sense exactly in Aristotle when he says that heaven and nature depend on God,<sup>70</sup> even if this Aristotelian dependence is not the fruit of an act of creation.

This same meaning is susceptible of a distinction that will originate a new aspect of the term. We can understand creation as the collection of *created* things, and this is how we understand it here, but you could also extend it to all *possible* things, as in the following paragraph.

### Everything Creatable

The *everything* we refer to can also be interpreted as the mere possibility of *creatable* things. In this case, there is room for possible substances, and taking note of this sense is important for the discussion about whether the supernatural is above everything creatable, or only above the created, or only above one part of the creatable.<sup>71</sup>

As we are not yet taking stance here on the supernatural, we will have to create a new meaning on the side that, at least for many writers, does not coincide with this one.

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<sup>70</sup> *Met.* XII.7 (1072b14).

<sup>71</sup> See Ripalda, *De Ente Supernaturali*, disp. 1.

### The Opposite of Supernatural

By definition, nature will be that reality and that order (precisely on whose structures the alluded divergences lie) that is opposed to the supernatural. Such a reality and order can be understood in different ways, not only against the catholic debate on its formal distinction from the supernatural (*supernatural quoad substantiam*), but also as that which we are used to, as that which makes us say "Natural!" and "Naturally!" in front of those things we find ordinary in our experience and way of thinking (*supernatural quoad modum*). Miracles, whatever they may be, are supernatural in the sense that they are not a natural thing that fits into this definition. It is understood that any investigation on the supernatural must begin precisely by specifying this sense of natural, which is only formally registered here.<sup>72</sup>

### The Essence of Things, Independently from the Subsistence

Along the same line as the limitation of the *everything* we have alluded to, if we first eliminated the reign of possibility in order to retain that of merely created substances, we must now separate essence from subsistence and consider essence as nature, as we have already done from the first point of view mentioned. The importance of this distinction appears more clearly in the theology of nature, which is where it possesses its acting force.<sup>73</sup>

### Material Substances

In the real, created world, we can choose the material substances as the only ends of God's creating action. They will constitute the material world, the *universitas rerum*, η του παντος φυσις.<sup>74</sup>

Here nature opposes spirit, and the long-standing distinction (recent only in name) between the natural and the human sciences or "sciences of the spirit" is based on this definition.

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We have, at this point, reached the last division of the totality of things in only two large groups. We must now begin a fragmentary division, not in the sense of dividing the Whole into two parts according to a determined point of view, but rather of arbitrarily taking a sphere of reality and applying the category of "natural" to it. It is understandable that at this point an indefinite number of meanings may arise. I have tried to classify the most characteristic ones, following a certain systematic criterion.

### The Spontaneous Inclination of Things: Instinct

Within the material world we can further distinguish the set of material causes in opposition, not to the spirit proper, but to the activities of art and culture. The reign of nature will be that of spontaneity (in intimate connection with the etymological meaning of the term), that in which things act by their own inclination, intrinsic to their innermost being. The famous aphorisms that state that "nature does nothing superfluous" and "is never idle," and so on can be deduced from this meaning.

Nature will be the innate, the instinctive, the spontaneous inclination. As we can see, the essential characteristics of the "natural" are fully preserved. We call "nature" the principle

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., disp. 1, sect. 1, n. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., disp. 1, sect. 1, n. 6.

<sup>74</sup> See F. Suarez, *Disputationes metaphysicae* XV, sect. 11, n. 5.

of all these meanings because they all connote a certain self-mobility, whether it be called instinct, spontaneity, and so on, which coincides with the fundamental attribute of nature as a principle of activity.

### Man's Thoughtless Actions

Still within the world of the instinctive and spontaneous, we must distinguish between the purely mechanical and that toward which Man tends in his complexity of feelings and volitions, and which, without belonging to the reign of the mechanical, is carried out with no calculation and reflection. Deep down, it is a useless distinction, but we nevertheless introduce it in order to overcome the Cartesian view of reality, even if within a similar point of view.

### The Reign of Determinism: Mechanicism

The previous meaning is denied by Cartesianism, which considers nature (as opposed to spirit) as a group of beings governed by complete determinism. Thus, not only would the material be considered natural, but also all that which is mechanically predetermined. Here nature is opposed to freedom, and it is confused with the reign of determinism.

### The Sensible World

The sensible world, insofar as it is opposed to the world of ideas, feelings, and so on, that is, the world of the senses<sup>75</sup> can also be—and has been—called nature. This is the meaning we refer to when we speak of the beauty of nature, for example, or of the object of the natural sciences, and so on.

### The Fundamental Normative Principle in the Moral Field

In the same way that we label "nature" a group of things that can be reduced to a certain principle because they present a certain order, in the moral world we call "nature" the fundamental principle of all normative judgment. In this sense, we speak of natural laws, natural right, and so on.

### The Character of Each Being in Particular

By limiting the field in which nature must be beginning, we could reach the end with the individual. This is also a common meaning, since we usually refer to a being's peculiar and unique character as "nature": for example, a person's temperament and character. Thus, we say of someone that they have an indolent or lively nature, and so forth. If we speak of inanimate objects, we also call the set of properties and characteristics that define it "nature," and thus we can say that sulfuric acid has a strong nature, that the nature of nitric acid is corrosive, and so on.

In a certain sense, we have again returned to the *particular nature* of each being as their active and conservative force.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In II Phys.*, lect. 1, n. 8.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.85, a.6, c.

## 3

## HISTORICAL ANALYSIS— THE GESTATION OF THE CONCEPT

It is obvious that a mere catalogue of meanings is not enough to reach the ultimate nucleus of a reality. After having performed this superficial excursus, we must now penetrate into the core. For this, we must turn to history and grasp the real gestation of the problem through the efforts the human mind has made to find the answer to one of its most fundamental questions.

We must also refer to history because the diverse meanings of the word "nature" are not only conditioned by the material meaning of the term, but also by its placement within the totality of each philosophical system. Thus, for example, even if realists and idealists call "nature" the intrinsic principle of operations, the real meaning of this formula is completely different in each case.

Turning to history is thus necessary in order to capture the few latent problems that these formulas have *covered* under the most diverse forms. Real philosophical investigation is a *discovery*.

Furthermore, there is another reason for turning to history. The historical explanation of a concept implies a certain evolution of the concept itself. History also penetrates into the core of concepts. In addition, the equipment used by the explorer is itself conditioned by history. The only way we can achieve any kind of transhistorical validity nowadays does not consist in denying history of any of its value, but rather in recognizing our dependence upon it.

### The Etymological Evolution

One can get an idea of the importance of a certain term by its antiquity within a given culture. However, one cannot construct the meaning of a concept by exclusively turning to its linguistic foundation, as both the evolution of the word as well as its precise meaning follow different paths from that of its etymological formation.

Nonetheless, the terms we use to express a certain concept, especially with reference to a time period in which the primitive etymological meanings of words had not completely disappeared, certainly shed a valuable light—even if auxiliary—on the vision of the true concept, or at the very least in the way it developed in the minds of its first creators. The etymological study of the term *φύσις* ("nature") confirms the valuable auxiliary role of philology.

### *Φύσις*

Already from the beginning of the sixth century BCE, we can find philosophical treatises *περὶ φύσεως* (*On Nature*). The earliest known text that speaks of *φύσις* seems to be a passage from the *Odyssey*.<sup>1</sup> This word is used not only by philosophers, but also by historians and

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<sup>1</sup> X.303 (see above).

other thinkers, which leads us to believe that it soon became a term that was commonly used by the people—unless literature itself took it from the spoken language.

There are numerous words with very precise meanings that are related to φυσις. All of them seem to be included in the meaning of the verb φυω: to produce, to make, to be born, whose middle voice, φυομαι, includes the nuance of "being born upon itself," that is, growing. Thus, φυη specifically means growth. Among the alluded nouns we find, for example:

- φυτον = tree
- φυμα = excrescence
- φυλлов = leaf
- φиту, φитум = bud
- φулон = race
- φулη = tribe, and so on

Aside from the adjectives and verbs deriving from it, like φυллας = covered with leaves, and φүтевω = to plant, and so on.

The root φу, whose primitive meaning seems to be that of "being born," appears in all these and analogous cases. This root is analogous to the Sanskrit and comes from the Indo-European *bhu*, whose primary meaning is related to the most important of human verbs and the most essential of all words: *to be*.

In Sanskrit and in Zend (with the same pronunciation as *bhu*) we find a great deal of the tenses of the verb "to be," and in fact this very same root is preserved in the current English "to be" in the German *ich bin*, and, apparently, in certain Latin verbal forms: "ama-ba-m," and others, aside from the root *fui* in *fieri*, *fore*, and so on. Thus, for example, *bhav-a-ti* in Sanskrit, and of analogous conjugation in Zend: *bav-ai-ti* = he is, and so on. The same root is found in Lithuanian: *bhu, bhu-ti* = to be; in Gothic: *bau-a, bává-mi* = I am (cf. Sanskrit); in Old High German: *bi-m* (*pim*, sometimes) = I am, and so forth.

Φυσις as "nature" comes from this root. Its double dimension of birth and generation, on the one hand, and to be and to become, on the other, is thus understandable. This internal polarity of the concept, which, on the one hand, emphasizes the essential and seemingly static character of a thing and, on the other, its dynamic and mobile character, is already found within the etymological meaning.

In Indic philosophy the concept of nature is also expressed by the same root. Thus, nature is called *svabhava*, and the *jivas* (individual souls) are named *bhagavanmaya*, that is, of divine nature. What is natural is what is genuinely divine. Nature is what *is*. This is why existence also is named by a word from the same root: *bhava*.

But when we turn to the Latin translation of φυσις, a new term, still unconnected to the Greek, appears: *natura*. We must, then, consider it separately.

### *Natura*

In the first place, φυσις is invariably translated into Latin as *natura*. Thus, conceptually they are the same.

Philologically, *natura* comes from *gnatura*, from *gnatus*, whose root is 'gena or, in Indo-European 'g'n, which offers nominal and verbal forms in almost all languages. Thus, from the sanskrit *jan* = to generate, comes the verb *jajanmi*, and it is related to roots and words such as *san* (in Zend) or *janu* (in Sanskrit), birth, production, cf. *genus* = knee. The father indicates that he has adopted the son by placing him on his knees. We are his children, of

his *tevnoz*, says St. Paul referring to man's divine filiation.<sup>2</sup> Tradition has always related this to the land from which all things emerge.<sup>3</sup> We belong to the genus into which we have been born. And this is where the relationship with *yuviz* begins to emerge.<sup>4</sup>

Apparently, there are some divergences in the interpretation on the origin of the following words, though a certain kinship with this common root is undeniable, at least for most of the following:

Gothic *keina*—*kin*—*kun*—*quin*, *guma* (cf. *Kind* in German), the Armenian *cnanel*, *cin*, the old German *kin-chin-*, the Latin *gen-men*, *ger-men*, the gothic *kuni* (race) in connection with *quin/queins* = wife, queen; *kunni* in Old German and *künne* in Middle German

And even if *γυνή* (*gynē*, woman) does not come from *γεν* but from the Indo-European root \**gʷʰonā-* (in Sanskrit, *jani*), it does not seem to be too far from the former, since in the language of the *Vedas* it is really *gana* (which turns into *βανα* in Greek) and in Sanskrit a parent (*genitor*, *γενετωρ*), is *janitah*, and *janitai* in the feminine.

Anyway, what is certain—and this is enough for us here—is that the word *natura* is directly related to *γιγνομαι* (Sanskrit *janati*; Zend *zan*) and *γενεσθαι*, *γενεσις*, and so on, and in this sense, *natura* is once again the fruitful origin of all beings. It is precisely in this sense that the ocean is repeatedly referred to as *γενεσις* in the *Iliad*. And *γενεσις*, from primitive Greece until Plato, simultaneously represents the origin of things, their beginning and their birth—the act that produces them and the reality from which they emerge, and the cluster of all these births forms a dynamic whole that is precisely *natura*. The primary feeling that stimulated the development of Greek philosophy, that of the movement and instability of things, turns to both of these words—*φυσις* and *γενεσις*—in order to express this experience.

Strictly speaking, diverse modifications of the same root appear many times to express this same experience. Thus, the noun *γενεσις* does not figure even once<sup>5</sup> in Hesiod's *Theogony*, where the verb *γιγνεσθαι* is used in every instance. We have to wait until Parmenides<sup>6</sup> and Empedocles<sup>7</sup> in order to find it. Nonetheless, the "technical" meaning of *becoming* will not appear until Plato.

We have, thus, enough data to insist for a moment on the relationship between the two roots.

#### *Φυσις and Natura*

*Φυσις*, as we have seen, is formed by the root that expresses the dynamic sense of the verb "to be," in opposition to that which indicates its static meaning (*as*, in Sanskrit); that is, it is internally related to *fieri*. And, on the other hand, *natura* is related to *γιγνεσθαι*, *γιγνομαι*, and *γενεσις*, with a meaning that is very similar to that of *φυεσθαι*. Even if both roots cannot

<sup>2</sup> γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ Θεοῦ, Act., XVII.29.

<sup>3</sup> "Genus a cognendo dictum, cui derivatum nomen a terra, ex qua omnia cognuntur, γῆ enim Graece terra dicitur" (Isidore, *Etymologiarum*, lib. XI c. I [PL 82.397]).

<sup>4</sup> It is very instructive to follow Heraclitus's concept of the geneav as temporal cycles. See an account in K. Reinhardt, *Parmenides . . .*, op. cit., 189ff. Since this dark thinker, founder of the *φίοντες*, as Plato (*Theaet.* 181a) will call his followers, cannot turn to *φύσης*, he appeals to *γένεσις*.

<sup>5</sup> We must bear in mind the relatively scarce use ancient languages made of abstract words.

<sup>6</sup> Fragm. 8 (vv. 21, 27).

<sup>7</sup> Fragm. 17 (v. 3).

be related etymologically, there is a very characteristic intersection between the Greek word and its Latin translation—and rightly so.

Two fully determined groups are formed in Latin from the root +*gena*: on the one hand, *igno*, *gens*, *genius*, *genus*, and so on, and on the other (*g*)*nascor*, *natus*, *natio*, *natura*, and so on. But even more surprising is the alluded intersection. In fact, the verbal forms of the verb "to be" in Latin are formed from the root *bhu* (where φύσις comes from): *fui*, *fieri*, *fore*, and so on. But at the same time these constitute the exact translation of the forms of the verb γίγνομαι. And, on the other hand, the forms γενεσίς, γίγνομαι, γενεσθαι, and so on, are formed from the root γεν (where *natura* comes from). Consequently, *natura* = φύσις and *fieri* = γίγνομαι.

Τῶν περὶ γενεσίν φυσικῶν, says Aristotle in a passage of the *Physics*, speaking of the natural things that are included in generation, from which celestial things are excluded.<sup>8</sup> This is a curious expression, which leads to suppose that a φύσις of things that are neither generated nor generating may also exist. And certainly περὶ γενεσίν seems to be a fully "barbarian"<sup>9</sup> expression, which was already suppressed by Themistius, Philopon, and Simplicius.

Φύσις, γενεσίς are the two oldest terms to designate the various forms of the dynamism of beings, and we have already seen their mutual relation, even if it is impossible to reduce them to one common root.<sup>10</sup>

Philology thus, in its own way, grasps the problem mainly by turning its attention to determined connections that specifically point to profound, real problems. Nature, this allegorical divinity that ancient myths believe to be the wife of Zeus, is essentially mother, generating, and, ultimately, the essential seed of things; it lies in the deepest layer of being, to which it communicates its essence and a new capacity for action (for generating, for moving).

Paraphrasing the Aristotelian expression that appears in his short text on Melissus<sup>11</sup>—where he says that, according to the opinion of many, nothing *is* (*eivai*) and everything *becomes* (γίγνεσθαι)—we can say that φύσις is the middle term in which the truth between the static indifference of the *eivai* and the wild inconsistency of the γίγνεσθαι meet. There is a φύσθαι that is the manifestation of a φύσις seen as a consistent passage between both extremes.

### *The Elements*

There seems to be a group of philosophers—the activists and advocates of the continuous flow of things—who would contradict all of the previous (and posterior) affirmations, since for them there is no nature: πάντα ρε. They are the eternal contradictors of the old Parmenides. But even they recognized some immutable cores of things, from whose combination and separation the beings of the world emerged. And for them, these cores, the elements, were the true φύσις.

It is useful to know how they referred to atoms. These were not only *atopoi* in their etymological sense of "indivisible," but also immutable, as well as the producers of all bodies. This is why it is pertinent to take a closer look.

Already the Indic atomist philosophy refers to the constitutive elements of material things, which are parallel to Greek atoms, as *bhutas*, which is simply the substantivized form of the root *bhu*. It can perfectly be translated as "nature." According to the texts that

<sup>8</sup> *Fis.* I.7 (191a3).

<sup>9</sup> This is how Ross puts it in his commentary to *Physics* (1936).

<sup>10</sup> Neither can we certainly assert the link between the root + *genē* = knowledge, to know, and *gnoscere*; that is to say, being mentally capable (to know) and being physically able (to generate).

<sup>11</sup> *On Melissus* I (975a15).

have remained, as well as in many other works of diverse tendencies, it was about five *bhutas* (elements) that constitute the ground of material creation, and which are sometimes called *tanmatras*. Nature is a Mother.<sup>12</sup>

Words related to φύσις are also used in Greece. Thus, Plato calls the elements τὰ γενή,<sup>13</sup> and Empedocles<sup>14</sup> calls them ρίζωματα, the roots of things. And even though it seems that he also uses the term στοιχεῖον<sup>15</sup> to speak of generated elements, perhaps this is a later way of speaking he applied to the roots of things. The meaning of this last term has been amply discussed: it appears to mean "one of a series," and, ultimately something irreducible to another thing, and from which composed things proceed.

As for Anaxagoras, he speaks of elements as the seeds (*σπερματά*) of things,<sup>16</sup> even if sometimes he also uses the term χρηματά, "things, substances."

This swift journey through philology has been useful to introduce the problem in relation to the issues that concern Hellenic philosophy, because, when a matter is very much alive, it is manifested at the slightest opportunity.

### The Problem of Nature in the Pre-Socratics

#### *The Method*

If the problems of the history of Western philosophy are full of difficulties, then the pre-Socratic question is perhaps the biggest one of them. Due to the lack of data on these first European philosophers, we tend to find more philosophy than history in their writings, we know their philosophy better than their history, and because of this, we tend to twist their thought. In order to know the philosophy of a time period or of an author, we must know their history, since this is the only thing that gives us an adequate background to comprehend the scope of the philosopher's declarations (he is, after all, a child of his time) and the meaning of his doctrine. Concepts also possess a historical undertone.

Yet we must not turn to the opposite extreme and end up with a merely historical investigation. We have in fact gathered the maximum amount of documentation on Hellenic history and its philosophers in order to understand the specific philosophical issue that interests us here. Yet we must not repeat that which we have learned from the historians, but rather develop that which their investigations have made possible.

The dawn of Hellenic philosophy concentrates on the problem of nature. Περὶ φύσεως, *On Nature*, is the inevitable title that Aristotle finds in almost all the philosophical works of the pre-Socratics, whether these were named so by their actual authors or their contemporaries.<sup>17</sup>

*Physics* is going to become the enduring name for the natural sciences, and *Metaphysics* the reflection on the ultimate structure of reality. This is the problem we are interested in investigating: not which *concept* of nature (which cosmology), but rather which *concept of nature* the philosophers have had.<sup>18</sup> It is obvious that there is an intimate relationship between

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *mātra* (in Sanskrit) and μητήρ (in Greek): mother.

<sup>13</sup> *Tim.* 54B.

<sup>14</sup> Fragm. 6 (Diels).

<sup>15</sup> Fragm. 7.

<sup>16</sup> See Aristotle, *Met.* I.4 (985a21ff).

<sup>17</sup> See Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, etc. Aristotle himself will call Φυσικής ἀκροαστεῶς (Lessons on Nature/Physics) his work on the first principles of the mobile being.

<sup>18</sup> [Ed. note.] In later works, Panikkar will make a distinction between cosmology (in the first

the two issues. Furthermore, the latter must sometimes be deduced from the former, in which, at least partially, it must be contained in an implicit way, since it is not really possible to speak "about" the things of nature if one does not have a certain notion of what nature itself is. And this journey will be necessary precisely in order to understand the writers of the essays Περὶ φύσεως, who do not define nature in a rigorous and exact manner.

The *nature* of beings is precisely what the pre-Socratics are trying to find. This is what one can infer by the title of their works, and what is explicitly stated by Aristotle<sup>19</sup> and tradition.<sup>20</sup> If they are trying to investigate the nature of beings, and if we investigate what *it* is—*materialiter*—that they are trying to find, we will know what their concept of nature is, the object of their investigations. This argument thus conditions the method we must follow.

Formally, the pre-Socratic philosophical problem deals with nature. *Materially* it is about *αρχή* as principle. *Nature will thus be αρχή*. This is the dialectical conclusion that we have to now show with greater clarity.

### *The Change Taking Place in the World*

In the first book of his *Metaphysics*,<sup>21</sup> Aristotle speaks of amazement as the ontological (*το πρώτον*) and historical (*καὶ νῦν*) commencement of philosophizing.<sup>22</sup> And so, the clear and profound Greek spirit was first and foremost amazed by the change taking place in the world, by the fact that things happen, and especially by all *generation*, that is, the most radical of all changes in the sublunar world, in which neither creation nor destruction—strictly speaking—occurs. And the Greek Man is amazed with intellectual admiration. The Hellenic spirit is not left wonder-struck and astounded primarily because of the impression of beauty, or the order of the world, but rather, what provokes its mental revolution is the fact that things that *are* a certain way, suddenly stop *being* that way, and in their place something else *appears* that will again change in its . . . (and here is where the problem lies) in its *being*, in its form, by something that causes some things to grow, others to disappear, others to vary and change without completely abandoning that which they were.

This change, which disturbs the Greek mind because of its allusion to non-being,<sup>23</sup> for this very same reason is considered unitarily and as a universal rhythm in which all things are connected, as *all* change puts forth the *same* problem, that of its subject. And since the problem is identical, the subject is also considered singular. This point of view seems to be proven by mere, ordinary observation: the astronomical skies appear to follow the seasons of the year, which in their turn are intimately tied simultaneously to fertility, not only of plants, but also of animals and human beings.<sup>24</sup> In other words, it seems as if cosmic happenings were intimately tied to the *generation* of living beings. Ultimately,

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sense) and *kosmology* (in the second).

<sup>19</sup> *Met.* I.3 (83b12).

<sup>20</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *In I Met.*, lect. 4 (72).

<sup>21</sup> I.2 (983b12).

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle certainly meant *πρώτον* also in the temporal sense, but it can be interpreted—always *quod nos*—as we have done in the text. Amazement implies imperfection in our intellect.

<sup>23</sup> See the admirable and meticulous passage by Aristotle: "So they [the first philosophers] say that neither the generation nor the destruction of beings is possible; because what comes to be must do so either from what is or from what is not, both of which are impossible. In fact, what *is* cannot come to be, because it already *is*; and from what *is-not* nothing can come to be, because it would lack a substratum" (*Fis.* I.8 [191b27]).

<sup>24</sup> The relationship between lunar rhythms and fertility is a fact that all cultures have observed, and which constitutes a problem that biological science still has not clarified in our days.

they form a unity. And this not only explains why most Greek philosophers considered the entire universe a living entity<sup>25</sup> (including Plato<sup>26</sup> and Aristotle<sup>27</sup>), but it also sheds light on our problem at hand.

Greek philosophy finds itself facing change in the world—a change that appears before its material eyes and becomes a problem when being considered with the mental eye. In fact, if—thanks to his *vouc*—Man grasps the being of things, that which distinguishes them from other things and makes them be precisely what they are, this being, this essence must be immutable, must always be the same, because, if it were another thing, I would not be up against the same thing. But I see that the thing changes, varies, and nonetheless, remains the same since *it itself* is changing. Socrates is the same who, after having been a child, turned into an adolescent and then a man. There has been no substitution of the child by another, older, human being. The same thing occurs when a seed turns into a tree, and so on. Soon after, it will be necessary to inquire about the subject of the change, about that which makes the thing be what it *is* and *allows* it to vary, even if only in its external *appearance*. This, briefly, is the problem of the pre-Socratics.

And this problem is not only universal, since everything changes, but also unitary, as we have already stated, since all change is a repercussion of other variations.

The historical fact of this unitary investigation also proves the metaphysical dimension of the Greek mind, which, by penetrating into sensible experience, reaches the one and only problem of change in all cosmic events. And given that, whenever one finds a common background in many things, it appears to be due to the same cause, the Greeks will try to decipher this ultimate and unique principle of reality, which constitutes the authentic problem of nature.<sup>28</sup>

We have momentarily alluded to *θαυμαζεῖν* (amazement) as the cause that triggers philosophizing; it is now fitting to specify this concept further, since the beginning of philosophizing in the West begins precisely because of the question of *φύσις*. Admiration depends on the point of view, on the eye that looks upon things. Nobody was amazed (at least, not with an admiration capable of triggering the forces of investigation) by the fact that apples drop to the ground when they fall off the tree until Newton wondered why they did not go up instead of down. Therefore, not the *θαυμαστά*, the things worthy of admiration that already existed even before Greece, are what initiates philosophy, but rather Man's capacity to be amazed. Speculation on nature did not come from an internal peculiarity of that particular way of looking (*νοεῖν*): generation, growth, is the most natural thing in the world when it is not contemplated through the *vouc*, the mind. Only the mind finds it amazing—read: miraculous (*miraculum*)—that what *is* stops being or becomes something else.

It has been said that reason was the great invention of the Greeks—their greatest *discovery*, as we should specify. And reason's first and primary problem is certainly the nature of things.

### *The Cause of Change*

Up to now we have tried to present the problem by referring to the minimum amount of terms, so as to leave aside more than twenty-five entire centuries of philosophy, which

<sup>25</sup> Plutarch describes Aristotle's cosmogonic idea very precisely in *Plac.* 881e, f. In *Phys.* VIII.1 (250b14), Aristotle asks whether movement could be a kind of life for all that exists naturally: "In a sense, all things are full of life." See also *The Generation of Animals*, 762a21.

<sup>26</sup> See *Timaeus* (33a-37) and *Laws* (896c-898c) where he speaks of the cosmic soul.

<sup>27</sup> We find the best proof of this in Theophrastus, who, following his master religiously, repeats this affirmation in an even clearer way. See H. Diels, *Berichte der Berliner Akademie* (1893), 101ff.

<sup>28</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.65, a.1.

would complicate our understanding of this first aporia of Hellenic thought. In addition, when facing this problem, the Greek thinker was forced to create concepts based on words that already had many meanings within his own, flexible language.

All languages have terms that are more primitive than others, and these undoubtedly are those that refer to the natural process of generation, both of human beings and animals as well as of plants. All of the terms that relate to generation stem from one or more common roots. And this semantic signification was maintained very much alive in those first centuries of consolidation of the Greek language. We have already insisted on this point in previous sections.

All things are characterized by their birth, which gives them their specific nature. This nature will, in turn, be the cause of successive generations and of any manifestation which stem from the depths of the thing itself. "Where are you from? Who are you the son of?" are the questions ancient peoples asked the foreigner, and the answers provided authorization, a passport of sorts, both of his personality as well as of his intentions, as we can repeatedly see throughout the *Odyssey*, for example. Origin is the mark of nature.

When the pre-Socratic philosopher wondered about the cause of change, about the immobile subject of variation (subject which, on the other hand, is that which gives things their character and unity), it is understandable that he formulated his problem by asking what *nature* is, what the generating force of things is. Nature already appears in a double sense here: either as the germinal principle of things, as that which the generator transmits to the generated; or as the generating being itself, in its totality. A thing possesses φύσις because of its capacity to give birth, φένει, and, analogously, the result of this production is also nature.

This distinction appears early on, if not explicitly, definitely effectively, with the introduction of a new term, when nature is designated as principle: *αρχή*. It is commonly held that pre-Socratic investigations center on *αρχή*, but we must not forget that they are about *αρχή τῆς φύσεως*, that is, the principles or the principle of nature. Because of this, the term φύσις is affected by an initial indeterminacy as it points to the result of the production, the product, as opposed to *αρχή*; and because the entire cosmos is conceived as the effect of a generation—since every sublunar being moves—consequently, it means the entire universe. Nevertheless, it never entirely loses its first active meaning. And this is so much so, that the later evolution of the word comes from this initial meaning.

Aristotle includes both of these meanings and their exact relationship in the same sentence. After stating his classical definition of nature as the principle of movement,<sup>29</sup> he adds, "All of the things that have this principle possess nature";<sup>30</sup> namely, nature as *naturata* (using later terminology, but which originates in Aristotle)<sup>31</sup> is the effect of nature as *naturans*, that is, of nature as principle. However, maintaining the same word φύσις for both concepts will originate confusions and misunderstandings throughout history. Aristotle, in fact, does not only use *αρχή* as an equivalent of φύσις, but also φύσις as a synonym for *αρχή*.<sup>32</sup>

What philosophical reflection in the dawn of Western philosophy is interested in is, thus, the study of the universe as nature, that is, as produced in such a way that it explains its mutations. The path that it will follow is that of wondering about the principle of this production, the principle of nature, the *αρχή*. Furthermore, any interrogation concerning a

<sup>29</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (192b20).

<sup>30</sup> 192b33.

<sup>31</sup> See *Phys.* II.1 (193b13).

<sup>32</sup> Thus in *Met.* IV.2 he specifies that the being is referred to in many ways, but all of it in relation to a principle (*αρχή*), when a few lines before he said the same thing referring to nature (φύσις).

principle is equal to looking for it as the principle of nature. And if this principle is the last principle of all things, the nature of which it is principle must be the authentic and last reality of the entire world; it must be the true object of pre-Socratic investigation; the entire universe.

For the first pre-Socratic thinkers, this principle is unique and there is no question of the possibility of it being multiple. They inquire after the *αρχή*, taking for granted that it exists and that it is one. We already pointed out the reason for this: they look for the cause of variation, and this variation is unique, since what becomes is identified with generation: φύειν and φύσις. Both words can have both meanings, and these are also preserved in the verb γέγοναι.

#### *Pre-Socratic Exegesis*

Having positioned the problem in this manner, it will now suffice to examine the characteristics of this principle as an explanation of change in the universe in general terms, without having to descend into the history of the cosmological conceptions of the pre-Socratic thinkers. This will be enough to reach the set of problems related to Being that already appear well developed in Parmenides.

We are referring to the investigation into the *nature of beings*<sup>33</sup> and, specifically, into the *αρχαί* which are constitutive of the φύσις of things. It is understandable that, at first, they looked for this principle among the data of experience. Such is the meaning of *water* in Thales: things are thought to really consist of water, which is considered ultimate reality, that which is most real in them. Nature, with all its wealth and great variety of appearance, is water. All in all, and even though it is already contained here in embryonic form, the leap to the extrasensible does not occur, apparently, until Anaximander, who recognizes that one of the essential characteristics of the principle of all things is that it possesses a certain infinitude which is what allows it to turn into all of them. And since such a principle cannot be found in the world of experience, he *postulates* its real existence as the foundation for everything sensible. He also identifies this infinite principle (*τὸ απειρόν*) with matter, and its characteristics are that it is: un-generated (*αγεννητόν*), indestructible (*αφθαρτόν*), and infinite (*απειρόν*).<sup>34</sup>

Once it is free from its ties to the sensible, the Greek mind can soar until reaching the precise concept of Being, from now on attributing reality not to the object of its sensible knowledge, but rather to the object discovered by its νοῦς. "The tremendous confidence that the Greeks place on their own mind is, despite possible exaggerations, Philosophy's *charta magna*".<sup>35</sup>

The topic of φύσις has been discussed from a historical and philological point of view, which, in a certain sense, comes before the philosophical one. Disregarding a few, irrelevant differences, the conclusions that these works reach confirm the thesis we defend here, even when differences in terms of history are greater among the researchers.

Thus, in a study exclusively dedicated to this topic,<sup>36</sup> Hardy holds that at first the term φύσις meant the world of external phenomena, and that from there it came to designate the *substratum* that becomes the base for these phenomena, and with which they are intimately tied. Ultimately, it is a new proof of the intrinsic relationship that Thales already established between movement and being, or, in other words, between being and becoming. And thus, specifically according to Empedocles,<sup>37</sup> nature implies a real becoming in the vulgar mind,

<sup>33</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* I.6 (189a27).

<sup>34</sup> See Aristotle, *Phys.* III.4 (203b7).

<sup>35</sup> See my "La Ciencia biomatemática" in *Arbor* 3 (1944): 356.

<sup>36</sup> E. Hardy, *Der Begriff der Physis in der griechischen Philosophie* (Berlin, 1884).

<sup>37</sup> Fragm. 8 (Diels).

while he substitutes it for that of the change or mixture of elements among themselves. This is precisely what Parmenides<sup>38</sup> means when he denies that φύσις may belong to Being, which is immutable in itself. There is much exegetical discussion about this Parmenidean affirmation, but it is not of direct interest for our topic. Analogously, Anaxagoras combats the generation and corruption of things themselves as an ideal of the "masses" about what nature is, and he builds his theory of universal change against it.<sup>39</sup>

However, there are others<sup>40</sup> who have considered the opposite notion and defended that the *substratum*—that is, substance, properly speaking—was what the first philosophers were looking for, and that that was what the problem of φύσις referred to, which would essentially consist in the search for the first, immutable matter, seat of the phenomenal modification of things. As we can see, this is not an essential discrepancy, since ultimately it reverts to the same thing. Nevertheless, this conception has generated a great controversy,<sup>41</sup> and it has ended up recognizing both points of view, although it denies that Burnet's interpretation is the only one, or even the main one.

Burnet's assertion does not limit itself to defending the sense of φύσις as *primary substance* in the pre-Socratics, but also adds that this is the interpretation that Plato and Aristotle give to it when they spoke of the pre-Socratics. And in the third place, that this is the fundamental meaning of φύσις. This last issue is the one that ultimately interests us.

There are two ways of elucidating this question: either from an exegetical point of view, or by trying to interpret the real problem that worried Greek thinkers and understanding what they ultimately meant, rather than concentrating on what they apparently said. This second method can be fruitful if it relies on the first and does not turn into an a priorism that is very frequent in the interpretation of Hellenic philosophy, which consists in projecting our own problems and preoccupations over twenty centuries of distance. Even if there are some "perennial problems" in philosophy, their "eternity" does not exclude either their progress or our being able to go into them deeper still. What we are interested in here is performing a synthesis of sorts based on using the valuable philological-historical contributions of scholars.

Four sources are needed in order to determine the meaning of the concept of φύσις from an exegetical point of view:<sup>42</sup> the critical discussions by Plato and Aristotle with regard to their predecessors, the actual fragments by the pre-Socratics, the doctrines of the classical Greek writers when they philosophize on their own, and the use of general Greek literature, especially from the seventh until the third centuries BCE. Veazie studies this last source adequately and reaches the same conclusion as Aristotle after having discussed the various meanings of the word: first and foremost, nature is οὐσία.<sup>43</sup>

It is not our place here to follow this path further on, not even to follow that of those who have walked it. In any case, it is merely convenient to consider their conclusions. In the thirty-four examples of general Greek literature, namely, in the writers that precede Plato, Veazie finds that thirty-three times the term φύσις refers to animated beings or, in

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Fragm. 17 (Diels).

<sup>40</sup> J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London, 1908).

<sup>41</sup> It has been summarized by W. A. Heidel, "Πλευραὶ φύσεως: A Study of the Conception of Nature among the Pre-Socratics," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 45 (Boston, 1910).

<sup>42</sup> See Walter B. Veazie, 1920.

<sup>43</sup> Veazie interprets it as follows: "It is seen from what has been said that φύσις primarily and in its prevailing usage is the very *existenceness* itself of those things which the source of motion is in themselves." But he should support his translation of οὐσία.

other words, to "objects" that appear to possess the principle of movement in themselves. In these meanings we observe the persistence of the vital and innate dimension of this potency or ability of which nature consists. These general orientations are enough for our own purposes.

As to the pre-Socratics themselves as a source, we can simply check the nine columns of Walther Kranz's *Wortindex* of the pre-Socratics<sup>44</sup> under the headings φύσις, φυεῖν, φυσικός, and φύτον. In a brief summary of the different meanings, we can observe that the main ones are: origin, natural and creative forces, natural capacity, instinct, essence, nature of things, substance, and so on.

Then there remain the two paths of turning to Plato and Aristotle either as philosophers of history or as systematic philosophers. We attempt to do this briefly in the next section, as we have already gathered enough material to avoid the danger of working out an a prioristic construction.

### *The Characteristics of φύσις*

The pre-Socratic φύσις, despite its multiplicity of meanings, maintains one fundamental characteristic that consists in being something very concrete and very real. Φύσις is not the unity of a logical definition, but rather a living unity that manifests diverse properties or qualities. The fact is that, ultimately, φύσις is inseparable from movement, from change. It is the problem of becoming.

Φύσις, more than natural order as such, is the real principle of that order, which unifies the properties that emerge from within a being; it is the permanent element that survives becoming and that, through the series of births and changes, ensures the inalterable unity of each being.

Thus, the pre-Socratic φύσις brought the natural elements of the universe together, along with the primitive matter from which they emerged, including moreover, in a primordial way, the coming-to-be of material things. This is, in essence, the fundamental problem of cosmology (the philosophy of the cosmic φύσις): to explain the be-coming of things. And it is also the precise and concrete problem that Aristotle will find himself facing: to discover the characteristic of being that allows it to be and not to be (to change, to move) without ceasing to be. The φύσις would be responsible for this possibility.

Without going any further, we see that the human mind here stumbles over the concept of Being. Εστὶ γὰρ εἰναι is Parmenides's essential postulate: Being *is*. This Being is immutable, singular, and most of all, *real* over and above appearances that only generate the opinions and illusions (*δόξα*) of the unlearned.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, for the pre-Socratics, nature is the authentic *reality* of things, which the various schools will then interpret differently. This nature is immutable, unique, imperishable, indestructible, in a certain sense infinite, and even divine for some. Thus, numbers, for the Pythagoreans, are the φύσις of things, because they possess these qualities. Others will call it water, fire, air, elements, numbers, atoms, matter, being. The latter is the denomination that prevailed: nature is the being of things because it explains—to *our mind*—what things

<sup>44</sup> This constitutes most of volume III of the third edition of Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin, 1922).

<sup>45</sup> Parmenides is perhaps the one who specifies the most amount of attributes of Being. In fragment 8 of his Περὶ φύσεως he tells us that Being is immobile, imperturbable, endless, unique in its genre. The Being, existing all in one *now*, is whole, continuous, one.

really are and how they come to be. Nature is the reality that makes no contradiction arise in our minds. Nature is what remains and that which is intelligible in change.

### *Nature and Law*

This characteristic of nature as the skeleton or framework of beings, as their intimate and permanent side, which pre-Socratic philosophy established for all time, appears very clearly and is fully confirmed by its opposition to the concept of law (*vōμος*), which was then being formed.

Even though the opposition φύσις-νόμος is often mentioned as belonging to the Sophist period, and experiencing a change of sign in Stoic culture, its origin lies in the first phase of Greek philosophy.

Before the ethical and political problem, during the Sophist era, which asks about what is established by means of the law as opposed to that which is conditioned by nature, there came the pre-Socratic question about the problem of the origin of appearance. That which appears, that which is external, does not represent the true and authentic φύσις of things; and the opinion, δοξα, of the ignorant and uncultured is often called νόμος.<sup>46</sup> In accordance with the root νεμ, <sup>47</sup> from where it derives, it could be interpreted as that which most people attribute to things, as the opinion that is held by most mortals. It is a genuine manifestation of Athenian antidemocratic democracy.

Many expressions by Anaxagoras, Empedocles, the atomists, and so on can be interpreted in this sense. Reinhardt<sup>48</sup> affirms that the origin of the polarity of these concepts comes from Parmenides, who does not use the expression νόμος but rather the perfect tense of the verb (νενομισθαι),<sup>49</sup> which already appears in Anaxagoras<sup>50</sup> and Herodotus<sup>51</sup> in the same sense. In Parmenides we find "the same thing, not the Scholasticized and rigid concept, but rather a living and fluid thought in search of an expression."<sup>52</sup>

We are not concerned here with the philological controversy, but rather with the philosophical conclusions. Doing without Reinhardt's interpretation of φύσις as *Ding an sich*, as a Kantian "thing in itself," what is certain is that in this first period of Greek philosophical reflection there is already a duality between φύσις, as that authentic and remote reality of things, and its phenomenal appearance (be this interpreted as it may), which from the beginning has been indicated by means of one of the forms of the verb νομίζειν.<sup>53</sup> The opposition φύσις-νόμος is certainly much deeper than its ethical or political application in the Sophist period, as we mentioned.

There is a text by Heraclitus "the Obscure" that may allow us to see this transition from the ontological and gnoseological order to the ethical and political one. The author of the Περὶ διαιτῆς,<sup>54</sup> under the clear influence of the philosopher from Ephesus, says that all of our doing and thinking is simultaneously φύσις and νόμος: νόμος insofar as we follow our false and

<sup>46</sup> Δοξα appears concretely as a synonym of νόμος in Plato, *Polit.* 364A.

<sup>47</sup> To distribute, to deliver.

<sup>48</sup> *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (Bonn, 1916).

<sup>49</sup> Parmenides, fragm. 6.8.

<sup>50</sup> Fragm. 17.

<sup>51</sup> *Histories* III.38.

<sup>52</sup> Reinhardt, op. cit., 87.

<sup>53</sup> To have an opinion, to think, to believe that.

<sup>54</sup> Chap. 11; quoted by Reinhardt, op. cit., 216.

limited representations, φυσις insofar as these false interpretations themselves are found—in spite of this—in concordance with divine law. We have here a φυσις abiding by a νομος, that is, by divine law. On the other hand—in connection with his political thought—Heraclitus associates divine law with the rest of human laws by saying that “all human laws are nourished by one law, the divine law.”<sup>55</sup> In this sense, φυσις would be the intrinsic law of things inserted in their interior by the Divinity itself, and νομος that which the human industry establishes in all of its amplitude (even gnoseological), even if, ultimately, it participates in (is nourished by) divine law, by φυσις itself. This is the metaphysical problem of history.

In these few lines we have outlined the enormous set of problems that surround nature, and that begin with the pre-Socratics and last until current times. Nature loves to hide,<sup>56</sup> as the profound and paradoxical Heraclitus already stated. And this is because φυσις, as the authentic αληθεια of things, must be discovered—above all—in its *latency*.<sup>57</sup>

### *The Sophistic Posture*

Before moving on, it may be useful to say a few more things about that peculiar Greek cultural movement—so human and so rich in consequences for the philosophy of culture—that was Sophism. The two extreme classical interpretations of this moment in Greek philosophy, represented by Grote and Zeller, are well known. The English historian<sup>58</sup> claims that Sophism is not a school, not even a unified movement, but rather something more like a “Platonic fiction” that has ended up grouping everything from this time period under the names of a few individuals, the “Sophists,” who have nothing more in common, perhaps, than their academic profession, as we would say today. On the other hand, the German philosopher<sup>59</sup> vehemently defends the unity of doctrine and the precise direction of Sophist philosophy. Currently we have reached certain clarity on this point by attributing unity, in terms of culture and meaning rather than doctrine, to Sophism.

And Sophism’s foremost problem—whose solution is heatedly debated by its own representatives and which is precisely what gives it its distinct physiognomy—is discerning what is κατα φυσιν from what is κατα νομον; that is, the question of nature itself.<sup>60</sup>

In the end, what we must study is the transition from cosmic to moral nature. Even though, as we have already said, philosophical interest concentrated more on Man than on the external world, this does not mean, as is often—and wrongly—stated, that all progress in philosophy represents a new step toward subjectivity and immanence.

The question of this transition is interesting not only because it presents a mutation of Man’s interest (an important issue that lies outside the scope of this study for the time being) but also because, historically, it is portrayed similarly to how the problem of history will be represented twenty-five centuries later.<sup>61</sup>

In fact, a multitude of constructions, history, tradition, culture, education, customs, which the Greeks designated with one word, νομος, in its broadest sense, were superimposed

<sup>55</sup> Frigm. 114 (Diels).

<sup>56</sup> Frigm. 123.

<sup>57</sup> The word αληθεια, “truth,” contains the root λαθ (to be hidden), *lat* (see *Latens*) in Latin, even if it could come from λαθος and ληθη (oblivion); its etymology has been greatly discussed.

<sup>58</sup> Grote, *History of Greece* (London, 1862), 6:52–97.

<sup>59</sup> Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen* (1876–1903), 1:932–1041.

<sup>60</sup> This “last word” of modern investigation is the same that had already been recognized by Aristotle, *Soph. Elench.* XII (173a7).

<sup>61</sup> See my *La dimension histórica del hombre*.

like the layers of an alluvium on top of human φύσις, which they considered as "that which is," the immutable, the base of all variations. Hence the enormous importance of the relationship between these two concepts, since ultimately what is being considered here is an anthropological problem.

Historically we have seen every possible solution, from the exclusive acknowledgment of φύσις to that of νόμος alone, including all the intermediate steps possible. But what concerns us now is the meaning of the actual posing of the problem.

We already saw the concept of a θεῖος νόμος in Heraclitus, at once the foundation of reason (*λογος*), of justice (*δικη*), and of human laws (*ανθρωπεῖοι νόμοι*). But facing this divine law, there is the popular and traditional belief in a series of customs (*τὰ νομίζομενα*) that have crystallized into habits and institutions.

In the pseudo-Hippocratic work we mentioned above, *Περὶ διαιτῆς*, which probably dates from the fifth century, it is said that human art and technique (*τέχνη*) are imitations of nature, imitations established by the divine mind (*θεῶν νοῦς*).<sup>62</sup> Hence the difference between φύσις and νόμος, the former as the work of the divine mind and the latter as that of the human one. Hippocrates even goes to the point of saying that an action that is fruit of human νόμος can, in time, become natural.<sup>63</sup> This is the problem of "second nature," such as habits that are fully rooted in our substance. This is important, not primarily for the Darwinian theory of evolution,<sup>64</sup> but rather for our conception of the anthropological problem of history. In fact, it begins to make us suspect that the concept of φύσις is not as rigid as it seems to be at first sight, and that a human convention, though obviously the fruit of a previous φύσις (and this is where the nucleus of the problem lies), can become part of the very nature of its subject.

This polarity, as we have pointed out, impregnates all sophistic discussions, but this is not the place to follow these. It is enough to have mentioned these ideas as examples of a set of problems, and especially as guides to help us understand the meaning that the question of φύσις had at that time.

### Nature in Classical Greek Philosophy

#### *Socrates*

Putting aside discussions about Socrates as a historical personage, we can accurately state that his mission was to imitate in the conceptual terrain what his mother did in the purely natural one: to help in giving birth—to concepts, in his case, to children, in hers. And this parallelism is not confined to an exclusively metaphorical image: nature needs Man's help, and his science, in order to exist, as in Man it has lost that vital force that it still maintains in animals. Human nature was wounded in body and soul by sin, as the traditional Christian conception states, and this is why it needs some help to reach its goals.

The aporias presented to the spirit by the changes in the physical world no longer cause admiration; instead Man's *interest* gradually steers toward anthropological issues, and Man himself and all the products of human culture become the center of discussion. Sophism represents Greek Enlightenment. Everything becomes subject to revision, and nothing resists the test. Socrates will be able to save culture from sinking by leading it to the firm ground of φύσις within the ocean of human constructions.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted by Zeller, op. cit., 2:635.

<sup>63</sup> Hippocrates, *De aëre, aquis et loc.* 14.

<sup>64</sup> As Alessandro Chiapelli ("Per la storia della sofistica greca," *Archiv. f. Gesch. d. Philos.* 3) would have it.

Facing the variable and mutable δοξαι that exist regarding Man and human affairs, Socrates searches for φυσις in the ethical order, in the same way that the pre-Socratics looked for it in the material order. But to find something permanent in the ethical order, he must previously look for it in the logical order as in its instrument. And this is how Socrates discovers the *concept*, a logical, safe, and immutable φυσις in the troubled waters of human opinion.

This formal setting did not originate in Socrates. When the Sophists directed their "interested" (in both senses) gaze toward everything human, they had already asked themselves if there was a natural law ("by nature," φυσις) parallel to the eternal and immutable φυσις of the material universe, that was also eternal and immutable, and that determined the behavior of all human actions in contradistinction to the extrinsic rules decided by the authority (θεσις or νομω). This law and these natural values (φυσις) must be founded upon the very same nature of the things that are under discussion (this is why dialogue is so fruitful), and this nature will then be expressed by the concept, which will be that logical, immutable ("essential," to say it once and for all) principle of things, that which characterizes them and which shows them to us as being what they are.

The current crisis in the concept of authority could perhaps be partially explained by once again keeping this proposal in mind.

### *Plato*

The concept, philosophy's great instrument, was thus established. But it was Plato who drew the last—and extreme—consequences of the greatest discovery of all time. His idealistic exaggeration is, therefore, comprehensible.

Plato begins with the Socratic postulate that virtue is only attainable by following the nature of things, which—as we have seen—is given by the concept. This is why virtue is impossible without science. And more than that, virtue is knowledge; it is knowledge in face of the variety of opinions of things; it means to have the "science" (and this is where Plato's paralogism, which we are not interested in discussing, lies) of the true reality, of the nature of things, of their being, their ουσια. This being, this nature that is open to thinking, is closed off to the senses: general concepts (ειδη) constitute the true principles of things. Platonic ideas are the authentic φυσις; they constitute the immutable being opposite the incessant phenomenal change, the real object of knowledge opposite the plurality of opinions, and the authentic purpose of our will opposite the misplaced excitations of our desires. Platonism is the unification of the logical, ethical, and physical αρχη. Nature is that which is universal and lasting, to put it in terms that were coined later on. Ideas—as true nature—are the reality that generates things and the germinal principles of all change.

The great amount of issues that pre-Socratic φυσις formulates is somewhat clarified in Plato. Yet the superior internal unity that we later observe in Aristotle is not yet present, and thus, in Plato's works we observe a multiple and equivocal use of the term. For Plato, φυσις is many times a synonym of ουσια<sup>65</sup>—the Platonic ουσια, of course.<sup>66</sup> Science consists in knowing the true nature<sup>67</sup> or idea of things. But in particular, φυσις refers to living nature in its characteristic of greatest individuality.<sup>68</sup> In this sense, the human soul is that which possesses the greatest degree of nature,<sup>69</sup> and therefore Plato speaks of ψυχης φυσις (nature

<sup>65</sup> See *Gorg.* 495A.

<sup>66</sup> See *Rep.* IV.433A; V.453E; X.598A; X.599D, etc.

<sup>67</sup> See *Rep.* X.612A.

<sup>68</sup> See *Rep.* II.370C; II.374V; III.359B.

<sup>69</sup> See *Phaed.* 245CE; 248D; 270C.

of the soul)<sup>70</sup> and *ανθρωπεια φυσις* (human nature).<sup>71</sup> For Plato, indeed, the concept is even richer. *Φυσις* is a potency, a faculty of action and a passion,<sup>72</sup> and this is why it adheres to some uniform laws, the laws of nature (*οι της φυσεως νομοι*),<sup>73</sup> which both the moralist and the politician must discover.

This is what can be said as a systematic summary of his thought. Historically, on the other hand, Plato appears as a resolute contradictor of the pre-Socratic *φυσις*, since all of his interest is directed toward demonstrating the incongruence of *φυσις* as the ultimate explanation of the cosmos, and to substituting the pre-Socratic solution for his theory on the soul. In practice, the rational soul occupies the same place that *φυσις* does among the pre-Socratic thinkers. The only things that Plato discusses are the characteristics of this *αρχη*. This is the reason why he is forced to accept that the soul exists *φυσει* (*by nature*), that is, that the soul is the real *φυσις* (nature itself) that is searched for.

There is a passage in his *Laws*<sup>74</sup> that summarizes Plato's critical point of view on the concept of *φυσις* in the other philosophers, both earlier and contemporary. He discusses atheism, and points out that the most ancient writing on the Gods affirm that the first *birth* (*φυσις*) was that of Uranus and of some others. The generation of the remaining Gods (*Θεογονια*) is also described as happening soon after this beginning (*αρχη*) or birth. On the other hand, others say that all of the things that were, are, will be, or exist do so either by nature (*φυσει*), by chance, or by art.<sup>75</sup>

This context allows us to interpret this *φυσει* as referring to things that exist by virtue of *their own power*, since it seems—so they continue saying—that the most beautiful and magnanimous things are led to perfection by their own power to become what they are, and by fortune (*φυσιν και τυχην*), while the least important are produced by the art they receive from nature and from the elements. Hence—so these atheists continue—water, earth, air exist by their own power to become (*φυσει*) and by randomness, but not by art. And they put forth several examples in which they repeat the same expression. Immediately afterward, Plato makes an effort to prove that this thesis which defends that the elements possess the origin of their power in themselves is nonsensical, and that one of their principles must lie in an external *ψυχη*.

The dialogue then continues by pointing out that these atheists consider the elements fire, water, earth, and air as the beginning of everything (*πρωτα*), and this is why they call them *φυσις*, while they believe that the soul originates in them.<sup>76</sup> We have then discovered the source of this illogical opinion held by these searchers of *φυσις*. In fact, they ignore what the soul really is, which is why they consider that things due to art come before those that are due to nature.<sup>77</sup>

But why is it that they use the term *φυσις* so incorrectly?—asks the interlocutor, Kleinas.<sup>78</sup> Because what they want to say is that *φυσις* is the first generating power; but if the soul appears to be the first, instead of fire or air, and so on, then we may truthfully state that

<sup>70</sup> See *Phaed.* 277C; *Rep.* IV.455AB.

<sup>71</sup> See *Conv.* 189D; 191D; *Tim.* 27A; 68D; *Rep.* III.395B.

<sup>72</sup> *Phaedr.* 270D.

<sup>73</sup> See *Tim.* 83E.

<sup>74</sup> *Leg.* X.886C.

<sup>75</sup> *Leg.* X.888E.

<sup>76</sup> *Leg.* X.891C.

<sup>77</sup> *Leg.* X.892A.

<sup>78</sup> *Leg.* X.892C.

it exists according to its own duty of existence ( $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$ ).<sup>79</sup> And this is true if one can prove that the soul comes before the body.

According to Plato, thus, the problem of  $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$  consists in finding where the *first generating principle* lies, whether it is in the primary bodies or in the soul. This principle will be called  $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$ , and the things it produces will be  $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$ . The Platonic thesis consists in defending that the soul is the primary force of things and, therefore, the true  $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$ —in other words, exactly the same set of problems we have been looking at up until now. It is the search for a principle that explains change, that is its cause, its generator. And the Aristotelian critique will simply consist in saying that this  $\psi\chi\eta$  is not necessary since, by means of forms, all things possess their driving force in themselves, that is, in their nature ( $\tau\alpha\ \epsilon\nu\lambda\omega\ \epsilon\iota\delta\omega\iota$ , “the idea inside matter”).

\*

In order to further specify the Platonic conception, because of its systematic and chronological importance (Aristotle and, to a greater or lesser degree, all of tradition draw on it) and because, furthermore, it represents the nucleus that gathers all pre-Socratic and Socratic opinions, we can say that Plato already uses the word  $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$  with a multiplicity of meanings, such as the nature of particular people and things, the nature of the universe,<sup>80</sup> the nature of the things of this world, and God (cf. *natura naturans*). Furthermore, he speaks of  $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$  as an objective reality and as subjective opinions.<sup>81</sup>

The polarity between nature and law that the Sophists draw attention to is the topic of discussion of the dialogue *Protagoras*. Protagoras teaches virtue, and he defends that it is not  $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$ , but rather  $\nu\omega\mu\alpha$ , not natural, but the effect of a human convention. His strongest argument—which implies a double meaning of “nature,” which, in turn, is the reason why the truth is held back—consists in saying that, if the opposite were true, that is, if virtue came from nature, it would make no sense to punish and reprimand people whose defects are simply natural.<sup>82</sup> Hippias, another Sophist, disagrees with this opinion and defends the opposite idea, preferring and placing nature above the law. We are of the same race and citizens of the same city because of the former, not the latter.<sup>83</sup> According to Hippias, Man can know  $\tau\eta\ \phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\ \tau\omega\ \pi\rho\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\omega\iota\omega$ .<sup>84</sup>

In his dialogues, Plato presents the arguments put forth by the different Sophists, but it is obvious that he defends the primacy of nature over the law. Thus, after Gorgias presents his ideas in the dialogue that bears his name (the historical Gorgias wrote a treatise even denying the actual existence of nature<sup>85</sup>) and succumbs to Socratic dialectics, one of the assisting members says that his defeat is due to having based his discussions on  $\nu\omega\mu\alpha$  instead of on  $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$ .<sup>86</sup> Strictly speaking, the Sophists themselves are divided into two schools, which respectively support either  $\phi\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$  or  $\nu\omega\mu\alpha$ .<sup>87</sup>

<sup>79</sup> I have not translated Plato's passage literally but merely summarized its meaning, keeping his own words as much as possible.

<sup>80</sup> *Lysis* 214B.

<sup>81</sup> *Leg.* VII.822B.

<sup>82</sup> Plato, *Protag.* 323DE.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> “The nature of (human) acts,” *ibid.*, 337CD.

<sup>85</sup> See Alfred Benn, “The Idea of Nature in Plato,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 9 (1896): 31.

<sup>86</sup> *Gorg.* 482E.

<sup>87</sup> See A. Benn, “Nature and Law,” *Westminster Review* 4 (1880).

Benn<sup>88</sup> has carefully catalogued the Platonic passages in which the expressions κατά φύσιν and πάρα φύσιν appear, which, apparently, are not very frequent until the time of Plato. But the only conclusion that can be derived from this, since it is not about merely following his analytical study of the *Dialogues*, is that in Plato the classical and definite sense of things that are founded on nature as those that are authentic, inward, and unchangeable takes root, as opposed to those that are mutable, contingent, and external. Hence the Platonic effort to found morality on φύσις, which implicitly comes from Socrates, and which, after a time of sophistic uncertainty, reappears as the mission of the moralist. Χρω τη φύσει, as Aristophanes solemnly used to say.<sup>89</sup>

Socrates's position is more one of conciliating the irreducible sophistic postures, recognizing a φύσις in Man that is necessary but insufficient—without νομός—for virtue. Νόμος is how we acquire the education and exercise that are essential for virtue; although neither of these are enough without an adequate base (φύσις). The Socratic παιδεία<sup>90</sup> consists in the harmony of choosing (νομός) and liking (φύσις) simultaneously.

#### Aristotle

The evolution of the concept of nature reaches its first moment of plenitude in Aristotle. He will even be able to speak of it reflectively, and to name up to five meanings of "nature,"<sup>91</sup> meanings that he develops in the first systematic history of Western philosophy and which, therefore, are already implicit in previous doctrines.

We are not interested in his critical work here, but rather in his constructive work and in his contribution to the problem of nature from a point of view that is consistent with his entire doctrine and the successive evolution of the problem. An exclusively systematic and ahistorical exposition of Aristotelian doctrines has frequently misunderstood the true sense of their philosophical stance.

Platonism had transferred the "true" nature to a transcendent world (τόπος ουρανίος). The things of the earth *participate* of the latter in order to be, and they *imitate* it in order to act. But participation (μεθέξις) and imitation (μιμησις) suppose a certain presence (παρουσία) of ideas in things, which Plato does not clearly specify.<sup>92</sup> Aristotle follows his teacher's formal proposal, thus following the Socratic direction and the most genuine Greek tradition: the true nature of things manifests itself in the concepts that the mind creates, and these concepts are abstract and general.

Universals continue to be the true nature of things. But the absolute Platonic separation of the world into the concrete and the abstract, or, in other words, of the world of the senses from that of the mind, does not satisfy Aristotle.<sup>93</sup> The most genuinely Aristotelian creation, his *Logic*, ultimately strives to find the true relationship between the general and the particular, and in this way allow for the unification of our theoretical life, which heads toward the general and is rooted in the particular. The brilliant metaphysical efforts of the Stagirite

<sup>88</sup> *The Idea of Nature in Plato*, art. cit., 37ff.

<sup>89</sup> "Follow nature!" *Nub.* v. 1087.

<sup>90</sup> Education.

<sup>91</sup> *Met.* V.4 (1014b18ff.).

<sup>92</sup> The Platonic problems are a bit more complex, but this does not concern us directly. See the entire dialogue *Parmenides*, where the problem of the immanence or transcendence of forms/ideas is considered in depth.

<sup>93</sup> See *Met.* I.9.

consist in reuniting the general and the immutable side (which the mind thinks of as real and, therefore, is effectively so) with the concrete and contingent side of the phenomenal world.

The Aristotelian solution will consist in saying that the universal is real but only exists in the concrete, and that, at the same time, the concrete exists because it fulfills an abstract essence. *Nature is the universal existing in the particular*. Nature is the true reality of things within themselves; it is that which makes them be what they are. This is why, when Aristotle speaks of looking for the "truth" of beings, he means the examination of their nature.<sup>94</sup> This is how the quintessential pre-Socratic problem of change and movement in the physical world is solved. It can now be explained without having to turn either to an Eleatic monism or to a materialist atomism, both inadmissible for different reasons.

In order to be faithful to the method we have undertaken, it would now be necessary to carry out a historical-critical study of Aristotle's position in regard to his predecessors, and then examine his own solutions systematically. But the first point implies repeating something that has already been greatly studied, and, on the other hand, is excessively lengthy, since it entails Aristotle's entire cosmological problem, because he develops his own system as a result of the criticism he undertakes of the cosmological theories of his predecessors. In regard to the second issue, this entire initial section of our study is impregnated of the Aristotelian spirit; specifically, the first meanings of the concept of "nature" can be understood as a commentary on the systematic development of the concept of φύσις in the Stagirite.

In this respect, it is now necessary to point out that the crystallization of Aristotle's philosophy is gradual and progressive, so that we find provisional expressions along with definitive ones in his writings. Hence, by examining the first meanings of "nature" in the previous chapter<sup>95</sup> on the basis of Aristotle's texts, one can observe that he calls φύσις everything that in some way is principle, even if later, in his mature thought, he reaches the conclusion that only substance is properly so. Thomas Aquinas's commentaries in this sense are essential, as he highlights the Philosopher's definitive acquisitions, discarding the provisional ones, with enviable penetration and with such circumspection that a superficial reading of his commentaries makes them seem mere paraphrases.

The greatest indeterminacy in the Aristotelian concept of φύσις does not lie in the interpretation of difficult passages,<sup>96</sup> but rather in the ambiguity with which he seems to use this word in order to designate different realities, especially in the question of the unity or plurality of natures. That is to say, when reading Aristotelian texts, we can observe that he sometimes refers to a universal nature, sole principle of all movement,<sup>97</sup> and sometimes to diverse species of natures, be they generic (the souls of the celestial spheres) or individual. Notwithstanding, Aristotle's main line of thought, and especially its later developments specified in the problem of universals, allow us to determine, without the slightest doubt, that he upholds a concept of nature as *individual* principle of movement within each being—even when there can be a universal concept of nature with a certain degree of reality, more or less ambiguous, in an author like Aristotle who for twenty years had been nurtured with the Platonic theory of subsistent ideas.

<sup>94</sup> *Phys.* I.8 (191a24).

<sup>95</sup> Specially meanings 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 9.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, his famous expression that not every soul is nature (*De Part. An.* I.1 [641b9]), which leads us to assume, on the one hand, that there are souls that possess a dynamicity comparable to nature's; but, on the other hand, its full meaning is difficult to understand, even in light of the context.

<sup>97</sup> See *Phys.* VIII.1 (250b11ff.); *Polit.* I.5 (1254b27); *De Coelo* I.4 (271a33), etc.

Movement will no longer have to be explained by a participation of the reign of being in that of appearance, nor will it be a "scandal," as it was for the Eleatics; rather, it will proceed from the very essence of being, from its very own nature, which, as such, is made up of a potential element and an actual one. And, with all this, we have taken another decisive step. Nature is no longer merely the single *αρχή* from which the entire world germinates, as if it were its principle, nor is it an ideal world about whose internal order Plato did not achieve much clarity, but rather it is in *every one* of the beings as its intimate principle. We are now able to speak of *natures* in the plural, and it will once again make sense, as it did before philosophical speculation unified the problem, to ask about the nature of a determined type of being or of a particular and concrete being, since its *φύσις* is its own and exclusively its own.

Let it not be said that Democritus's atoms, for example, already constituted a "nature," since they were merely *the* nature of all beings, insofar as they constituted the single and ever-identical, immutable, and imperishable reality of things. For Democritus,<sup>98</sup> it is not that *every* thing possesses *its own* nature, but rather that all things are made up of a determined number of atoms, which are what constitutes their nature.

It is not necessary to go further into a historical investigation, because this study represents a positive interpretation that tries to *develop* the potential of Aristotle's thought; so that, to a great degree, the uncertainties that textual criticism<sup>99</sup> has identified in his concept of nature disappear, as well as those coming from an exegesis too much attached to the materiality of his expressions.<sup>100</sup> If this, on the one hand, allows us to appreciate his errors and incongruities thoroughly, on the other hand, it exaggerates his internal contradictions, making it impossible to take the consequential advantage of the fruitful Aristotelian seed.

### The Evolution of the "Natural" in Post-Aristotelian Greek Systems

Yet another mutation in philosophical interests bestows a new accent on the conception of nature. With the thriving growth of philosophy, its dignity and influence over society also rose, and what up until then had belonged exclusively to the realm of customs, tradition, or religion—that is to say, the practical life of the individual—was then entrusted to philosophy. If philosophy was considered to be something so important and universal, it could certainly attempt to be Man's guide and, above all, abate his unquenchable thirst for happiness a bit. All the moral systems of that time agree on the formula that is destined to make Man virtuous and, therefore, happy: *to live according to nature*.

We must here ask ourselves not so much how the diverse pre- and post-Aristotelian systems fill this concept materially, but rather how they deal with its *formal* meaning. And the latter is, essentially, the Socratic one—although in many cases tinged with a strong pantheistic overtone that dehumanizes ethics, as we can see, for example, in the Stoics, for whom nature was, above all, a universal reason in the monist, metaphysical sense. To live according to nature will then be to live according to reason; and moral action based on Man's nature, which had been called "acting according to nature" (*φυσει*) since the Sophists, will now be referred to as acting according to the universal law that governs all (*νομω*). The explanation for this lies in the fact that this law, reason, has turned into the last *φύσις* of reality. The duality established

<sup>98</sup> Fragm. 168 (Diels).

<sup>99</sup> E.g., Bonitz, *Index aristotelicus*.

<sup>100</sup> As, for example, Zeller does in *Philosophie der Griechen*, when he laments the fact that Aristotle does not specify his concept of nature.

by the Sophists is thus unified. *Nature is universal law.* We have gone from a realist point of view to a nominalist one. Ultimately, the same process will later be repeated in Western culture during the Middle Ages.

In every case, it is assumed that nature—whatever this may be—is or represents that which is immutable or eternal, that which helps Man reach his perfection if he follows it, that which helps him fully become Man, and eliminates the illness and pain that afflict mortals. The new nuance that appears here (aside from a primordial interest in human nature, though on some occasions it is submerged in a pantheistic Whole) is its eminently positive value. When cosmology and metaphysics were the only disciplines that bothered to consider nature, people could perfectly do without this evaluation; but once this concept was integrated into ethics, its fundamental categories of good and bad could not but be applied; and nature could not be considered anything but good, even if there were some instances in which the very logic that is immanent to the system inverted the evaluative sign.<sup>101</sup>

In the midst of the greatest diversity of conceptions about nature, the very concept of the ultimate and immutable reality of things (whatever this may be) remains in its core, more or less strongly related to the last principle of the universe. Xenophanes's pantheism,<sup>102</sup> the identification of nature and divinity in the Stoics,<sup>103</sup> already defended by Heraclitus, and the coming together of Aristotle's God and nature so that He can move it,<sup>104</sup> until becoming the immanence of his later followers,<sup>105</sup> and other similar doctrines,<sup>106</sup> all acquire a more fully metaphysical character with the emanationist interpretation neo-Platonism will give of it.

The primitive etymological meaning of the word "nature" once again gains importance. Nature, because it generates all things, is identified with God. But since nature is at once understood as generating and generated and, in a certain way, its distinction with regard to Divinity is a matter of common sense, the ambiguity will be solved by the Plotinian theory of emanation (leaving aside here the historical problem of whether it comes before or after Christianity). Thus, nature is the emanation of God, and all things proceed from nature, which is their remote formal principle; it is nature that confers representability and rationality to things, says Plotinus,<sup>107</sup> against the more common opinion that denies this. Furthermore, "what we call nature is a soul" or, rigorously speaking, a second soul, since it has been generated by a previous soul that lives a more potent life.<sup>108</sup> Thus, corporeal nature is evil insofar as it participates in matter—that is, the absence of the soul—even when it does not represent the supreme evil.<sup>109</sup>

It is curious to point out the hermeneutic circle here emerging: in the pre-Socratic period, the soul belongs to nature as one more thing that lies within it, and it was not given excessive

<sup>101</sup> Thus Hegesias, by taking the eudaimonistic principles of Epicureanism to their ultimate consequences, consistently defended an absolute pessimism.

<sup>102</sup> Quoted by Diogenes Laertius, VII.87.

<sup>103</sup> See Sextus Emp., *Pyrrh. Hyp.* I.224.

<sup>104</sup> This is one of the weak points of Aristotelianism: the coordination of divine transcendence with its immanence to the world by means of material contact; see *De Gen. et Con.* I.6 (323a20). His followers will soon solve this problem in a pantheistic sense.

<sup>105</sup> Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* I.35.

<sup>106</sup> It appears that Plotinus may be interpreted in a different manner than that of mere pantheistic emanation, but this is a monographic problem in the history of philosophy that does not concern us.

<sup>107</sup> *Enneads* III.8.4.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> *Enneads* I.8.4.

importance; now, instead, it is the actual essence of nature, and it will be considered all the more real and good, the more it participates in the soul.

From now on, very few modifications in this direction will enrich or bestow new shades of meaning on the formal concept of nature. Hermes Trismegistus,<sup>110</sup> or Iamblichus,<sup>111</sup> for example, merely summarize the opinions we have already depicted, but—perhaps—with a lesser taste of neo-Platonism than Plotinus. All of medieval neo-Platonism will consider nature as one of the emanations of the One (*causa prima, intelligentia, anima, natura*),<sup>112</sup> specifically, the fourth and last one. Nature thus continues being the last term of action of the First Principle.

### The Innovation Christianity Introduces in the Concept of Nature

#### *The Relationship between Nature and the Transcendent*

The investigation into nature has always been inscribed in the realm of the Divine because it concerns something that is, in a certain way, absolute. Already in the first Greek philosophers, we perceive the tendency to consider the *αρχή* of the world, at the same time, as the Divine (*το θεῖον*). And deep down they were right. Aristotle himself places God and nature in parallel or, sometimes, as synonyms.<sup>113</sup> But his fine judgment makes him specifically state once that nature is "demonic," not divine.<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless, we can affirm that a relationship with God, strictly speaking, does not exist, and the Aristotelian *αφή* ("contact" between God and the world) is full of imprecision and uncertainty. The enormous tension between God and the creatures—ultimate motive of all metaphysical thought—is the weak point of Greek philosophy.

In Man, this tension is represented by a double polarity between creaturely and freedom: total dependence on God insofar as being and its conservation, on the one hand, and autonomy and responsibility, on the other, insofar as the center that produces actions whose reason of being (though not their ultimate one) lies in their subject.

Man's constitutive tension is, consequently, essential to Christianity, which recognizes both creation and freedom. Here, the *historical* problem of Christian philosophy arises, that is, the question of the Hellenic wisdom's ability to provide a rational base for the supraphilosophical truths of Christianity. In fact, it is not unquestionably evident as such that the Greek systems are able to give account of the Christian Fact. This would mean that their principles contain this explanation virtually.

Now then, this tension is put forth and at the same time definitely channeled by Christianity. The beginnings of written revelation already contain this truth, which centers and sets all of our dealings with God: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth."<sup>115</sup> This is a radically different conception because it places all things in a new horizon. The world is not simply sustained, modeled, or organized by God, but rather *created* by Him, dependent on Him in the most profound core of its being and existing.

Thus, with Christianity, a new philosophical *mutation* occurs. The center of the Christian vision is, evidently, Christ, but Christ possesses a divine nature; therefore, everything that

<sup>110</sup> Stob., *Ecl.* I.37.740ff.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., I.5.186.

<sup>112</sup> This is also a frequent concept in the first Arabic philosophers.

<sup>113</sup> *De Gen. et Corr.* II.10 (336b31), where θεός plays the role properly attributed to φυσις.

<sup>114</sup> *De Div. per Somn.* 2 (463b14).

<sup>115</sup> Gen 1:1.

cannot be interpreted in direct relation to Christ will, at the very least, remain inscribed in relation to God. But this does not refer to a First-Motor God, who the mind constructs because it needs Him to finalize its system, or to a God who directs natural forces and the destinies of people according to His whims, but rather to a personal God, unique God, Creator and Father.

Here we will emphasize His attribute of Creator. God is not only He who puts the world into movement, but He who creates it<sup>116</sup> without any previous substratum: *ex nihilo sui et subjecti*. Perhaps the greatest philosophical distinction between the YHWH of the Old Testament and the Gods of neighboring countries consists in this, His power as *creator of good and evil*,<sup>117</sup> of light and darkness.

This Christian intuition will soon need tools with which to express its own revelation, and it will therefore be forced to cover itself in words that, because they are overloaded with meaning, require greater precision of the concepts. This can clearly be seen in the concept of nature, one of the battle horses of the titanic struggle for the correct formulation of the dogma through the numerous deviations in any direction. Moreover, even within orthodox criteria, its meaning differs widely according to the different theological conceptions of reality. But, leaving the theological elaboration aside for now, we are ready to evaluate Christianity's new contribution from an exclusively philosophical point of view.

Nature is the depository of the polarity of the created being, which fluctuates between Being and nothingness; it is the bearer of this tension between Being and the beings, between the One and the multiple, between the Absolute and the relative. Christianity cannot underestimate the first pole of this relationship, as the unity and transcendence of God is the first tenet in its creed. But neither can it dismiss the second pole as mere appearance, since the reality of heaven and earth created by this God is its second tenet. This was the Christian philosophical problem of nature.

And this has been the theory of Christian philosophy in the effort of Christianizing Platonism and Aristotelianism—an effort symbolized in the eminent figures of Augustine and Thomas of Aquinas, respectively.

Aristotle's φύσις is certainly not a created nature, but rather one that is only moved by God by virtue of a certain contact. But this does not imply that its principles are incompatible with the idea of creation, or even that they do not implicitly and virtually contain creation, as is the case in the distinction between essence and existence, developed later on as an explicit doctrine by the Arab commentators.<sup>118</sup> His principles, and not his integral system, will be used by St. Thomas, whose philosophical doctrine, however, cannot be branded as mere Aristotelianism. St. Thomas interprets—that is, he modifies—Aristotle. Thus, for his idea of creation, he uses Aristotelian notions, but the overall conception is a Christian one. Thomism is something more than mere Aristotelianism, just as current Christian philosophy must be something more than mere Thomism. The notion of creaturality had no preeminence whatsoever either for Plato or for Aristotle, yet it occupies the center stage for Christianity. Even if it were implicitly contained in God's revelation to the Jewish people, its radical transcendence was not appreciated until the very same God creator descended to Earth to become man. With Christianity, there comes a new mutation in history.

<sup>116</sup> See the magnificent chapter 21 of Book II of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles*.

<sup>117</sup> See Is 45:7; Amos 3:6; Lam 3:38 in the Vulgate version, where God is shown as the author even of *malum* (evil). See a similar passage in *SB XI.1.6.9*.

<sup>118</sup> Especially Avicenna.

*The Creaturality of Nature*

For Christianity, nature cannot be God, but it cannot be disconnected from Him in any way either. The novelty that Christianity introduces in human thought is the *creatularity* of every nature.

The mutation introduced by Christianity in the concept of nature is contained in the idea of creation. All things in this world *are* just because they have begun being, because they are created, because they participate in the *Being* on which they depend completely, in their being and in their actions. We must consider creation not only in its agent (God) and in His action (active creation), but also—and primarily, as far as we are here concerned—in its effect, as the end of the creating activity. In this sense, creation is the creature, and being the effect of God is its formal element, so that the created entity is creature insofar as it is the end of a creation by God. Conservation, seen from the creature, is nothing more than the permanence of the creative act. The creature is nothing more than the crystallization, the solidification, of a divine act *ad extra*, the end of God's gaze.

It is thus understandable that the pressing philosophical issue is no longer only about the being that remains, but rather about *which class of being* concerns the created entity, which class of entity do beings who are not God have, what it is that things—which are beings *ab alio*—have received on loan from God, since only He exists *a se*. What is the being of created entities?

This being will then be able to explain the variations and all the obvious dynamism of created things. This is the reason why the problem adopts the same form as in Greece: What is the nature of beings? A question that here means: What is it that substantial element that created beings have received from God, and that allows them to be what they are and to act as they do? Could it be that it is God?—who acts and *is* inside them, since God acts deep down within every being?<sup>119</sup> Then the question arises: Can an *ens* that is *ab alio* possess an activity *a se*, its own principle of operations, that is, a true nature? And Christianity, which has taken the dimension of creaturality (the radical dependence of every being that is different from God) *very seriously*, must answer "no," there is no contingent being that possesses a totally pure activity, in its own and exclusive way, since its own existence is *ab alio*.

Creatures depend on God completely, since they have received their being from Him through creation, and they will continue to possess their being through conservation. However—and creatures are not God precisely because of this—between them and God there is an infinite abyss. Even if creatures owe everything to God, they are *something* that is not God. The question of this *something* is the Christian question on nature. In a certain way, asking about nature is asking about everything that is not God. This is why the three great chapters of Christian philosophy will be: God, the world, and Man between the two.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, the interest in nature represents the interest in everything that is not God, though connected to Him during the first Christian times, and disconnected from the Creator in the following periods. For this reason, already at the end of the Middle Ages, the Church considered the *exclusive cultivation* of the sciences of nature as something suspicious.

<sup>119</sup> "Deus immediate est in omnibus per essentiam, praesentiam et potentiam" [God is in all creatures immediately by essence, power, and presence] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, III, q.6, a.1, ad 1).

<sup>120</sup> It is very interesting to note that the four principles Origen deals with in his *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* as fundamental truths of Christianity, both in front of the heretics and the incredulous, as well as for the believers who desire to look deeper into their faith, are: God, the world, Man, and the Revelation.

But the initial question about the variation in the world remains pressing for all philosophical minds. Just because of this change of perspective, the question is no longer about the immutable subject in evolution, nor about the constitutive essences of things as the explanation of this subject, but rather about the consistency of created beings as *instruments of God*, the only possible ultimate cause of any real modification, both in the order of being as well as in the order of doing. *Things, in their own nature, are the instruments of God.*

This aspect, a fruit of the idea of a constant and dynamic creation, is summarized in the inspired maxim: "As the clay is in the hands of the potter, so are you in my hands."<sup>121</sup> All of nature is in the hands of God, who is not only able to annihilate it, but who can also do whatever He wants with it and elevate it. And there is a special passivity that corresponds to this divine power. God may do as He wishes with every nature and it will simply obey Him, without there being any need for it to have an active, prior natural capacity to carry out its calling; this is the "obediential potency." And this is also that which leaves the door open for miracles in the realm of nature, and that which allows for the distinction of a double natural order, special and general, which has so many consequences. But this is not the place to develop the *theology of nature*.

### *Contingency*

We now need to consider the instrumentality we referred to earlier in greater detail, since the core of the Christian vision of nature lies within it. Nevertheless, we must not forget that a full elucidation of the Christian concept of nature can only be obtained by recurring to the strictly theological notion of nature, and that, therefore, everything we say here is a truncated anticipation of that concept.

Christianity places Christ, and with him God, as we have mentioned, in the foremost place of the integral human interest and, consequently, also of the philosophical order. In the same way that the Greeks feel the transience of things and turn to their minds to look for an immobile support to face the world's mobility, Christians feel themselves to be nothing in front of God,<sup>122</sup> and know that nothing exists outside and above Him, and that nothing exists without Him.

The Greek horizon of *mobility* changes into that of *contingency*, because all things, seen from God, are simple creatures.<sup>123</sup> This experience of *contingency* is ultimately a *feeling of creaturality*. But this annihilation of Man occurs because he knows himself to be *of God*, dependent upon Him, and especially loved by Him. Moreover, if God is Being, His creation will also be *being*. When the creating Being creates, He creates *being*—a being that is full of power and impregnated by nihility. Nothingness concerns the created entity more than being, since a creature is more concerned with what it is in itself than with what it has from another (from God) and, considered in itself, it is nothing.<sup>124</sup> Creatures are not really, because

<sup>121</sup> Jer 18:6.

<sup>122</sup> Ps 39:6.

<sup>123</sup> X. Zubiri in *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios* (Madrid, 1944), 203, speaks of *nihilism* as characteristic of Christianity, but this aspect of nihilism should not be exaggerated, precisely as nature is *something substantial*, different from both nothingness and God.

<sup>124</sup> See the dense text by St. Thomas in *De Aeternitate Mundi*: "Prius enim inest unicuique naturaliter quod convenit sibi in se, quam quod solum ab alio habet. Esse autem non habet creatura nisi ab alio, sibi autem relicta in se considerata nihil est: unde prius naturaliter inest sibi nihil quam esse" [Now, whatever naturally pertains to something in itself is prior to what that thing only receives from another. A creature does not have being, however, except from another, for, considered in itself, every creature is

they are not Being (they are not that which *is*) and yet, neither are they not, since they are from God, they come from Him. Outside of God, the world is grounded on nothingness. The "relegation" of the created being—and of human existence in particular—consists in this being *ab alio*. This is the starting point of the Christian conception: the contingency of all beings outside of God, the constitutive contingency of all created beings.<sup>125</sup>

Strictly speaking, the Christian characteristic of being is not its coming *ex nihilo*, but rather its origin *ab alio*. This is why Christianity's horizon is not that of nihilism, but rather that of contingency, or, if you prefer, that of *aliency*. Nature, although it is unstable in itself, tends toward God before it tends toward nothingness.<sup>126</sup>

The Christian dogma of creation brings with itself the alienity of all created things, whose existence is not *a se*, but rather *ab alio*. And contingency is based on this *aliency* because the created being is the fruit of a completely free act of divine will. Theology descends to contingency (to be able to be or not to be) starting from alienity. Philosophy returns to alienity starting from contingency.

Moreover, a being whose existence is not *a se* is necessarily imperfect. It comes from God and is made of nothing. Not only is a being of this sort mutable, but mutability is one of its intrinsic and essential characteristics.

God *is*; the creature neither *is* nor *is-not*, but rather it *is-not-yet*, it becomes, it makes itself, it is constitutively mobile, mutable, in potency, as Thomas Aquinas will later say.<sup>127</sup> Now then, this mutability, or, better yet, the principle of this constitutive ontic movement, is nature. This is why that which defines it and, consequently, constitutes the created being itself is its situation within this movement, its greater or lesser proximity to Being—whether it is more or less impregnated of Being, if I may be allowed to use this metaphor. All creatures are insofar as they return to the original source of all beings, to God. God is the end of all creation, not only from a global and transcendent viewpoint, but also concrete and immanent. Nature is nothing more but an aspiration toward Being, a sparkle that comes from Him and returns to Him. Therefore, longing for God is constitutive of any created nature.

Strictly speaking, until the idea of creation appears, metaphysics cannot fully exist. With the sublunar world (including the human spirit) can one—directly—only do physics. Metaphysics implies a relationship with the ultimate foundation, with God. The existing beings are all relative, and until this relationship is not examined, they do not appear in their last structure. Behind the creature is nothingness and the Absolute. There is neither prime matter, nor primitive chaos, nor an undefined cycle. Things rest on God and they come from nothing. Creation is the constitutive relationship of things and their nexus to the Absolute.

When a non-Christian vision sees the transiency of things, it looks for the absolute behind them: ultimately it does not transcend the level of the created things, it looks for a *thing in itself, absolute*, behind the actual beings. The Christian knows that, at this level, behind beings there is nothingness. Only above—and inside—their is God. True metaphysics cannot appear until we discover God as creator. God as First Motor is still a *physical* ultimate principle of the world.

Mutation seems to come from nothingness: things are changeable because they are made from nothingness, that is, they can return to nothingness in order to continue *being*

nothing, and thus, with respect to the creature, non-being is prior to being by nature].

<sup>125</sup> "Illud quod habet esse ab alio, in se consideratum, est non ens" [It is true that what has its being from another is nothing considered in itself] (Thomas Aquinas, *De Pot.*, q.3, a.3, ad 4).

<sup>126</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Pot.*, q.5, a.1, ad 16.

<sup>127</sup> See *De Potentia*, q.5, a.1, ad 16.

another way. Change is a reference to non-being, to nothingness. Something changes when it is annihilated, in part, not completely, or in a certain aspect, insofar as it is action, insofar as it is form (this is where the whole problem lies: what is it that is annihilated, what disappears?) and in its place the same thing emerges in a different way, or rather simply another thing (substantial change).

If things *were*, they could not change, because they would not stop being. This is why tradition considers things as coming from God and from nothingness. When God changes them, when God thinks about something else, so to speak, that creature is left with nothingness.

When we say that something is "made up of nothingness," we mean that it *is not*, that it is contingent, that it does not support itself, that insofar as it *is*, it is more God than itself. If this were not true, God could not make us divine, He could not be *more* my being than I am myself.

All of this is what Christianity more or less brought with itself. We must now briefly examine the way that these embryonic ideas developed.

### Scholastics

#### *Polarity in Nature*

If God is the creator of the world and the immanent force that sustains it, then the true nature of things, as their essential principle, will be in God—in the *ideas* of God, St. Augustine will then say, adopting the Platonic concept. This distinction between God and the ideas of God comes from the analogous difficulty Aristotle's disciples (Theophrastus, Strato, etc.) stumbled upon, that of reconciling God's immanence in the world with His transcendence. The concept of nature has always been used to smooth over this tension, as can be clearly seen in later developments by the Scholastics. God is the supreme vital principle, God is really nature (as principle); but at the same time, God is not the world, so that the world/God relationship is only real by starting from the world. Consequently, the universe, aside from ultimately sustaining itself in God and by God, needs some support that lies nearer; it needs agents of Divinity who possess a certain substantiality of their own, a sort of divine instrument possessing a certain consistency so that everything does not disappear and become diluted in God or in nothingness. These continuations of the First Cause are the natures of things. And the different tendencies of Scholastic philosophy will be divided according to whether the latter are attributed a greater or lesser consistency.

Nature can then be considered as an *active force that produces operations*, or as the *passive capacity that receives the action of God*. That is, as *terminus ad quem* with regard to God, or as *terminus a quo* with regard to its own actions. This polarity will cause a tension that the diverse Scholastic tendency will solve differently, according to which pole they accentuate. Here we attempt to expose this set of problems bearing both options in mind.

In the Middle Ages (besides theological speculation, which, on top of effectively clarifying concepts and penetrating into them, also manages to fix a very precise terminology), philosophical reflection continues to be engrossed by the capital problem of philosophy, following the most authentic Socratic tradition: the problem of universals.

Boethius's commentary and translation of the *Introduction to the Categories* by Porphyry are not the cause of this discussion, but merely a consequence of its existence. The incentive was deeper.

The reason this problem appears in the foreground is twofold. On the one hand, the Trinitarian problem plagued the believing mind, which was looking for the maximum possible

understanding of this Mystery. Due to the "tritheism" of a nominalism that was consistent with itself (see Roscellin), realism seemed to have the upper hand. But, on the other hand, during the entire Late Middle Ages a Platonic tendency was predominant in all of philosophy, and, within it, there was one point which, if taken to its ultimate consequences, proved to be contradictory with the essential principles of Christianity. Being in fact is a general category for Plato, and a thing has more entity the higher it is in the scale of universality; but Christianity had reassessed the concrete (incarnation) insofar as independent personality, and with his own destiny.

Therefore, a revision of principles was necessary, and this is what the celebrated question Boethius worked out by following Porphyry was about:<sup>128</sup> what reality concerns the concept of things? The immortality and eternity of Being had been confined to universal concepts, and in these lay all of the characteristics that the Pythagoreans had discovered in numbers, so that they were considered the authentic nature of all things.<sup>129</sup> The great issue of philosophy was once again openly discussed, that is, what was referred to in Greece as the discussion on the principles (*apxai*) of things, and is here called the dispute between realism and nominalism—which, with different shades of meaning, but ultimately constituting the same problem, will be called criticism, empiricism, idealism, phenomenology, and so on.<sup>130</sup> What is the consistency of the ideal being that our mind creates or discovers? This is the basic problem of philosophy because it is the question of the consistency of its own object.

Such a polarity appeared clearly insofar as *nature* seemed to have to participate both in the individual as well as in the universal characteristic since, in order to be a being's concrete principle of *motion*, it needed individual character, and because it was the characterizing and defining principle of *being* itself, it needed to be a universal.

#### *Nature from the Viewpoint of Realism*

This duality seemed to have to be sacrificed for the sake of the Christian supremacy of the concrete: it is then that the rights of the Christian personality prove to be incompatible with the philosophical principles of Platonism.

The contradiction became apparent when Johannes Scotus Eriugena, in translating the books of the Pseudo-Dionysius for the Latin world of the ninth century, completely assimilated his thought and extracted from it a fully Platonic system. The world is *Deus explicitus* by virtue of a hierarchical *egressus* in which angels occupy the place of the first Platonic "intelligences" and universals that of the last Platonic ideas in order to constitute the one and only nature,<sup>131</sup> God and world at the same time, in which the minimal possible intensity of being—and with this (in a very Platonic and medieval sense) of perfection—corresponds to individuals, and vice versa.<sup>132</sup> Nature will therefore have four aspects: insofar as it creates and

<sup>128</sup> Boethius, *In Isagogen Porphyrii Commentaria* (ed. Brandt), 159, ll. 3–8.

<sup>129</sup> See the Pythagorean Platonism and numeric symbolism of Bernard, and especially of Thierry of Chartres, well into the twelfth century.

<sup>130</sup> The fundamental problem of modern cosmology is precisely this: what kind of objective reality do its (physico-mathematical) predictions about things have?

<sup>131</sup> Scotus Eriugena gives us the following definition: "Quod est natura, non solum creata universitas, verum etiam ipsis creatrix solet significari" [By "nature" not only the whole of creation is meant, but also the one (divine nature) creating it] (*De divis. nat.* III.1).

<sup>132</sup> Gilson tries to reevaluate Scotus Eriugena's orthodoxy; but even if it were possible to save him—subjectively—from logical pantheism, one cannot deny that he took to its extreme an interpretation of Christianity based on Plato's and especially Plotinus's categories.

is not created, insofar as it is created and it creates, insofar as it is only created, and insofar as it is neither one nor the other. This line of thought has its roots in St. Augustine<sup>133</sup> and his distinction between the cause that makes all and is not made itself (*causa, quae facit, nec fit*) and causes that *faciunt et sunt*.

It is fitting to insist, for a moment, on this interesting medieval thinker, who represents a powerful transition period and who has been interpreted in so many different ways. Thus, the four species of nature in the aforementioned text are, strictly speaking, different among themselves. The first, which creates and is not created, is nature in its creating function; the last, which is neither created nor creates, constitutes Divinity itself in its most proper, intimate nature, unrelated to any *ad extra* life; the second, which is created and creates, refers to the exemplary natures of things; Platonic ideas are of the third kind, which are created and do not create, and which constitute the things of the universe.

Nevertheless, more than this classical discussion of nature, we are interested in seeing Scotus Eriugena's precise concept of *natura*—of φύσις, we can say about this medieval author immersed in Greek culture.

In fact, Scotus laments that both in Greek and in Latin οὐσία and φύσις, *essentia* and *natura*, have been used as synonyms. He then proposes their precise differentiation<sup>134</sup> according to their etymology, affirming that οὐσία or *essentia* must be said of that which cannot be either destroyed, nor increased, nor decreased in every visible or intelligible creature; and that φύσις or *natura*, on the other hand, must be reserved for the generation of the essence in determined places, times, and matter; that is, for that which can be destroyed, increased, decreased, and affected by diverse accidents. In this sense, we can say that every creature is οὐσία insofar as it subsists in its own reasons (Ideas); and it is φύσις insofar as it is procreanted in some matter.<sup>135</sup>

This distinction gives us the key to understand his affirmations of pantheistic flavor in an orthodox manner. We must refer everything to οὐσία, excluding φύσις.<sup>136</sup> But, in his exaggerated realism, Scotus ultimately understands a mysterious duality of existences, one in the state of οὐσία, by which it is eternally in the Divine Word and it is properly the Word itself, and another in the state of φύσις, by which the thing belongs to the changing world of our senses. But human reason cannot understand this intimate union of eternity and temporality.<sup>137</sup>

#### *The Nominalist Posture*

The problem could also be formulated as follows: what is the *nature* of things? The question is here posed in the reverse sense as to how the Greeks formulated it. When facing the great variety of things, the Greeks ask about the true nature of things as that which is immutable, which gives them being. Medieval Man, when facing the same problem, asks about the type of being that belongs to that (i.e., universal concepts) which is already commonly accepted as the nature of things. We must not forget that the nominalists are the revolutionaries, the followers of Aristotle as opposed to the realists, who represent the genuine defenders of the Platonic tradition as embodied in St. Augustine. But for both, nature is the authentic being

<sup>133</sup> *De Civitate Dei* V.9.

<sup>134</sup> *De divis. nat.* V.3.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> See, for example, "Intellectus enim omnium in Deo essentia omnium est. . . . Nihil aliud est enim omnium essentia, nisi omnium in divina Sapientia cognito" [The intellect of all things in God is the essence of all things. . . . The essence of all things is nothing else than the knowledge of them all in the divine Wisdom] (*De divis. nat.* II.20).

<sup>137</sup> *De divis. nat.* III.16.

of things (which some will place on ideas and others on individuals), the being from which things emerge. Nature is essentially Mother.

The "nominals" of the eleventh century aspire to subordinate theology to logic. Their problem was not pure logomachy,<sup>138</sup> although later it may have degenerated into this. Logic prevailed because the principle of noncontradiction also applies to theology. But logic teaches (and they here referred explicitly to Aristotle's book on *Categories*) that only the universal may be predicate, and since *res non predicatur*, since individual substances can only be subject, it follows that these general concepts are not *res*, but rather *nomina*. Facing an exaggerated realism, the nominalists will then say that genders and species do not represent the true nature of things, that they do not constitute the "ground" from which things are born and emerge, but rather that the individual beings themselves are their own nature. Nature is then nothing more than the individuality of each being, incommunicable and different from everything else, and in direct and immediate dependence on God.

#### *Augustinianism and Thomism*

The importance of this duality between nominalists and realists forces us to dwell on the Scholastic conception of nature a little bit longer, and to discover the double Christian mentality that emerges whether one or the other of the two poles on which created nature lies is accentuated.

These two extreme conceptions obey a different evaluation of the created world. We have here the core of the great Scholastic tendencies. The Thomist revolution grants individual beings their own consistency and substantiality (it is the Magna Carta of *creatures*) though without failing to recognize their absolute dependence on God. While the Augustinian point of view highlights divine causality, though without denying the causal efficacy of everything created either: the *rationes seminales* are *real* causes for St. Augustine. As usual, great men are much closer than their disciples assume; it would be difficult to identify more with the spirit of Augustine than Thomas Aquinas did.

Nature is the nexus that unites the world to God. This is why tradition has accepted that—in a very broad sense—"nature" denotes all that which God creates one way or another, and thus the *Magister Sententiarum*'s aphorism that "God does not make what by nature is not"<sup>139</sup> turns out to be true, as Augustine had already explicitly stated<sup>140</sup> and also given the ultimate reason of: because what God does is the nature of all things. He is the ultimate principle of operations in anything. The intimate nature of things is God. God's actions acquire a certain created metaphysical consistency, like a kind of nourishing gland for the circulation of divine force in nature, or a kind of electrical transformer of primary energy.

This is the Augustinian conception—conditioned not so much by Augustine's own temperament as by the historical situation of the struggle against semi-Pelagianism. The Pelagianists wanted to make human nature the principle of operations of the supernatural order. By contrast, what had to be stressed was the passivity and dependence of nature, being meant as an effect of God, as the *terminus ad quem* of His action.

For voluntarist Franciscanism, which is a direct descendant of St. Augustine, Pelagianism is almost a blasphemy. It would mean to take root in this temporary earth; to become "worldly" and "pagan"; to accentuate the existence of some secondary causes with an entity in themselves

<sup>138</sup> Struggle of/on words. [Ed. note.]

<sup>139</sup> Pietro Lombardo: "Quod natura non est Deus non fecit."

<sup>140</sup> *Contra Faustum* XXVI.3.

and an autonomy with regard to God; to affirm that the nature of things lies in something that is not the divine ideas, which are the models of all created beings. Ideas *are* the nature of things. They, through whose participation everything that exists *is*, are in a certain way real. They bestow reality upon things. Hence the pantheistic seed in the Platonic explanation of the universe. From God being the one who directly causes fire to burn (total occasionalism)<sup>141</sup> to God being He who constitutes the total nature of fire and thus of all things (pantheism),<sup>142</sup> there is only one step. Hence, also, the subsequent Franciscan reaction toward the opposite extreme, until reaching a radical nominalism. We must, nevertheless, point out that, even though the form is completely opposed, the ultimate attitude is the same. In neither school will things be an emanation from God, gradually descending through ontologized universal concepts, but rather they will be created *directly* by Him, *individualiter*, and with no further connection (and here we can glimpse a common ground) than that which unites them directly to God. And thus, again, having avoided pantheism and having introduced an abyss between God and the world, things will exclusively and directly depend on divine causality.

Consequently, creatures are images and imprints of the Divinity precisely *in their nature*, which is what they have directly received in participation of the Creator. Perfection in a being lies in the greater or lesser participation *by virtue of* its own nature, and *in its own nature*, of the Divinity, because what beings have received from God is their nature. More than that, nature is simply all that which God does, and not only the end of the creating act of God but also that of His conserving and cooperating act.<sup>143</sup> Thus, everything that *is*, is good insofar as it *is*, and evil is not any kind of substance<sup>144</sup> or nature.<sup>145</sup> Genuine Augustinianism. This doctrine, at its core, is completely Christian and was adopted by the most disparate Scholastic movements; the only thing they argued about was the autonomy that concerns such a nature as an instrument of God.

Thus, St. Thomas<sup>146</sup> fully recognizes that any modification that God carried out by His entirely free will on whatever created being would be natural.<sup>147</sup> And the reason for this can be no other than that nature is precisely the intimate act of God on things—in keeping with St. Augustine, in whom Thomas finds a support among the *auctoritates* he cites. And this is his most authentic opinion.<sup>148</sup> Therefore, the more elevated a nature, the more intimate everything that emerges from it.<sup>149</sup> The culmination is the act of God. Already for Aristotle the φύσις of things was the last and most remote thing that we know.<sup>150</sup>

Thus, nature is not only the bridge between God and the creatures; it is also the crystallization of divine action in things. And yet there is an infinite distance between the creatures and God—even though there is no distance between God and the creatures. This is why earlier we mentioned the problem of pantheism as intimately related to the question of nature. If nature is the principle of operations of a being, and God cannot yield to anything

<sup>141</sup> See Malebranche, *Entret. sur la Métaphys.* IV.11.

<sup>142</sup> As pointed out by Thomas Aquinas in *Sum. theol.*, I, q.105, a.5, c.

<sup>143</sup> See Bonaventure, *In II Sent. disp.* 37, dub. 2.

<sup>144</sup> See Augustine, *Confessions*, VII.12.2.

<sup>145</sup> See Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 1.

<sup>146</sup> *Sum. theol.*, III, q.44, a.2, ad 1.

<sup>147</sup> See Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 13.

<sup>148</sup> Proof of this lies in his concept of "obediential potency."

<sup>149</sup> *Contra Gentes* IV.11.

<sup>150</sup> See Aristotle, *Phys.* I.1 (194a16). A good exegesis of this text can be found in *Sum. theol.*, I, q.85, a.3, c.

else the fact of being the last principle of all activity, there must be an intimate relationship between nature and God. Nature, as the active nucleus of a being, is like the representative of Divinity. It is the being's constitutive dynamism as a participation in the Pure Act. But let us not get ahead of ourselves.

Every creature enjoys a certain likeness to divine essence<sup>151</sup> by virtue of its *species*—a species that is none other than its own nature.<sup>152</sup> At the bottom of every being there is a *connatural friendship*<sup>153</sup> to all the rest, as a result of their (analogical) identification insofar as they are participations of God. Nothing exists—says Dionysus—that does not participate in the One.<sup>154</sup>

God, creator, keeper, and mover of the entire created world exercises His power by means of nature. This is the point of *contact* between God and the creatures. Just as the people elevated to grace are not moved by the Holy Spirit if they are not somehow united to Him, like the instrument is not moved by the artifice if not by contact or some other union, so God's all-embracing power, from a *natural* point of view, is exercised by His contact and presence in the nature of every being.<sup>155</sup> This is why nature is to God what art is to Man,<sup>156</sup> with the difference that Man can only exercise his action on things *ab extra* and God does it from within beings themselves. In this way, He continues to communicate the constant dynamism that is manifested in a determined tendency toward something that is properly theirs. Nature is the final cause placed by God in the interior of beings.<sup>157</sup> It is an inclination, placed by the First Motor, toward a determined end; and this is the last metaphysical reason as to why things act toward an end, whether or not they know it, because their acting force, which resides in their nature, is a force placed by God.

And on the nature of this force—on the “nature” of “nature”—lies the diversity of opinions within Christianity.

#### *The Instrumentality of Nature*

The Christian conception of nature crystallizes in the notion of “instrument.” Nature is autonomous; it is properly cause—but an instrumental cause that receives all its causality from the First Cause.

Nature is a *certain instrument* of the action of God: instrument and, therefore, passive with regard to His action. An instrument that is not very useful in the hands of God, for the Platonic-Augustinian line of thought, and an instrument with its own consistency, and responsibility in the case of Man, for the Aristotelian-Thomist outlook.

That man is moved by God like an instrument does not imply that he does not also move himself by virtue of his own free will. God is the cause of our motion and of our action, but He is “only” the first cause—or ultimate, if you will, inverting the order. Nature, we could say, acts of its own accord, and it limits itself to imitating the action of God in itself; it is a *second* cause but a *real* cause, which in the rational creature can, with the same force received from God, turn against the order established by Him. Although we must not forget that the second cause is “second” because it is *so through* the first; that is, it is cause, but not independent. God is

<sup>151</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.15, a.2.

<sup>152</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.71, a.2, c.

<sup>153</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In Dionys. De Div. Nom.*, XI, lect. 2.

<sup>154</sup> *De Div. Nom.*, last chapter.

<sup>155</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.68, a.4, ad 3.

<sup>156</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In II Phys.* lect. 14.4.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

agent, and all nature, both rational and irrational, is moved by Him; but He is the principal agent that grants autonomy to all creation. This critical freedom goes as far as the existence of the spirit, which has been "created (as a) creator."<sup>158</sup> Beings are precisely differentiated by the different nature that they have received from God.

This consistency that is specific to second causes in Thomism in no way reduces the absolute causality of God.<sup>159</sup> The first cause and the second cause do not partially share their influence on the effect, but rather they both act in a complete manner, though differently, namely as main cause and as instrumental cause. They are both necessary since this is how the order established by God requires it; this order acquires its full signification and ontological soundness precisely because of the role that second causes play in it, which, participating in divine causality, manifest the perfection of the Creator to a greater degree.

Nor does this instrumental character of created nature reduce its specific operability—since, even though what is moved by a principal agent is referred to as instrumental, and it does not need to be like the main agent, the reason of instrumentality is anyway something greater, allowing the instrument certain operations of its own according to its peculiar form. In fact, even if the activity of the instrument, insofar as instrument, is not different from that of the main agent, it can, nonetheless, possess another operation (or a determined aspect of the same) in its own way insofar as it is also a certain being. Thomas emphasizes the fact that every creature is the source of its own activity, but, if considered before God, it is no more than a mere instrumental cause.<sup>160</sup> Instrumentality does not mean occasionalism.<sup>161</sup> And precisely because of this we can distinguish two operations in Christ,<sup>162</sup> even though the instrumentality of his humanity, with regard to his divine nature, is in this case different because it is a hypostatic union.

Ultimately, both of the aforementioned tendencies complement each other, and for all practical purposes every Christian philosophical view (including the Scotist) bears both extremes of the question in mind, to a greater or lesser degree. Thus, speaking, for example, in a language intelligible to Augustine while not strange to Thomas, the latter's position could be expressed as follows: in every agent we must distinguish the thing that acts and the virtue or force according to which it acts.<sup>163</sup> The thing that acts is nature, and its intrinsic virtue is God, since the thing does not produce its own effect if not by divine virtue. Therefore, it is not superfluous to place God as the first cause beside the second cause. But at the same time, even if God produces all of the effects in things by Himself, it is not superfluous to consider that the second causes exist as well—for the reason we mentioned earlier, that there is a more perfect order by virtue of a greater participation of divine causal power.<sup>164</sup> This greater perfection of created beings is what makes us feel a lesser "need" for God in Thomism than in Augustinianism; and later on, more exaggerated, this will lead to modern philosophy.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>158</sup> See L. Lavelle, *La Présence totale* (Paris, 1934), 14.

<sup>159</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, III, q.19, a.1. The instrumental cause, though it is second, has its own *form*. This is how the aporia between foreknowledge and freedom is solved. God moves the rational instrument while preserving its freedom.

<sup>160</sup> *De Pot.*, q.3, a.6.

<sup>161</sup> As Malebranche would put it, instead: according to him, natural causes are not "true" causes, they just give God an "occasion" to act.

<sup>162</sup> *Sum. theol.*, III, q.19, a.1.

<sup>163</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentes*, III.70.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> We must not forget that both Descartes and Kant—especially the former—claim to be the

It has been said, and rightly so, that the difference in the philosophical order between Augustinianism and Thomism lies in the substitution of the domination of participation by that of efficient causality and, ultimately, of Platonic *μεθεξις* ("participation") for Aristotelian *εντελεχεία* ("actuality"). Things certainly participate in God, but at the same time they are authentic causes, although secondary.

The difference lies, thus, on the approach and the field of interest more than on the core of the doctrine. The difference appears huge only when we consider Augustine's Platonic structure facing Thomas's Aristotelian framework; but many times it is better to approach the reality of things by ignoring the scaffolding that our feeble human mind has had to construct in order to better capture it. One of the most noteworthy peculiarities of St. Thomas's work is that it is possible to defend it and follow it with an Augustinian spirit as much as or even more than with a so-called Thomist spirit, without causing excessive violence upon it. This is perhaps the result of the friendship and respect with which Thomas treated the spirit and the doctrine of the African bishop.

The theocentric Christian vision of nature could, thus, be summarized in the following way: God moves and sustains all things and guides them to their own ends after having created them. This intervention by God, although immediate, is arranged in a hierarchy and is supported by the essence of things themselves—that, insofar as it is principle of operation, as immediate instrument of God, is called "nature." This conception is fully consistent with the previous meanings of essence and nativity, since it emphasizes the fact that things are generated (Greece), created (Christianity), sustained (Augustine), and directed (Thomas) by God. The expression "God author of nature" thus has full ontological significance; it means God as *naturans*, which represents, as has been mentioned, the most genuine meaning of "nature" in the entire Scholastics. This interpretation also wholly preserves the meaning of nature as intrinsic principle, since there is nothing deeper nor more intimate to each being than the divine action through the nature of that very being.<sup>166</sup> This is why everything that is performed for God is natural,<sup>167</sup> because only He can move all beings from within; only He is the perfect artist.

After exposing the essence of the Christian conception, it would be appropriate to descend to the—quite symbolical, all in all—differences in the polarity between Augustine and Thomas; but we must not forget the limits of this study.

We have said enough about the originality of the Christian position with regard to Greek philosophy. In its relationship to God, nature has not only acquired precision and consistency, as we have seen—and it has also become the last redoubt of the intelligibility of being, as we will see—but, at the same time, this relationship to God allows for the breakthrough of a supernatural form in nature, nor only *quoad modum* (miracle) but also *quoad substantiam* (grace). The Christian nature is open, able to receive the divine action; it is full of "obediential" potentiality in front of the closed Aristotelian *φύσις* ("nature"). The chapters devoted to fortuity and destiny in Aristotle's *Physics* are here reabsorbed by the doctrine of Providence, and—in an initial sense—many of these processes will surface again in modern physical sciences.

A study of the interpretation of these two Aristotelian concepts in St. Thomas provides the key to appreciate the difference between Aristotelian *φύσις* and Thomist *natura*. Here, however, we are only interested in a philosophical characterization of nature.

restorers of the true philosophical tradition against nominalist standpoints.

<sup>166</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.105, a.6, ad 1.

<sup>167</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.94, a.5, ad 2.

*Natura Naturans and Naturata*

It is convenient, before closing this section, to insist for a moment, once again, on the above-mentioned expressions *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. From a historical point of view, we could say that these two terms, popularized by Spinoza, are already found in Eckhart, William of Ockham, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas, Averroes, Vincent of Beauvais, and a few others. The oldest representatives belong to the first half of the thirteenth century: at that time, the verb *naturare* was common even outside of philosophical terminology. If we consider the meaning and not the mere term, the origin of this nomenclature dates back to the Greeks themselves, Plato and Aristotle included. It is then understandable that any reference made from nature to God shared this characteristic of a dependency on God that was also in a certain way called "nature," as we clearly see in St. Augustine, St. Isidore, and Scotus Eriugena.

Siebeck<sup>168</sup> shows that Proclus also struggles with the same problem through the concepts of *παράγον* and *παραγομένος*, and that these same expressions are already found in Pseudo-Dionysius,<sup>169</sup> even though the forms *naturata* and *naturans* do not appear until Averroes. Nonetheless, we must point out that the expression *natura naturata* accentuates not so much the unity of nature of the creature with the Creator as much as its distance and differentiation—something along the lines of how, in current language, when we call something "a creature" we wish to emphasize its characteristic of being "created," therefore different from the Creator. Furthermore, the expression *natura naturata* as creature is more common than that of *natura naturans* as referring to the Creator.

Though abstaining from the philosophical and scholarly aspect of this issue, after having explained the Christian idea of nature, it is understandable that the phrases under discussion—when correctly understood—perfectly express God's relationship to His creatures. If nature is the consistent base and the substance of all beings, it is obvious that (even if analogically, as with all divine attributions) it is convenient for God to be nature; at the same time, if the creature is anything *per se* (not *a se*), stable and of its own, it must also be nature. Now then, it can only have received the latter through creation by God; but, on the other hand, God can only have communicated it as participation of His own nature. Participation analogically understood and with ontological degradation, but participation, nonetheless, of divine nature itself.

Thus, this participative act of the divine nature could very well be called *naturing*, since it comes from a nature and its end is the constitution of a created nature, which can then be properly called *natured*. God's creating action would be a *naturare*, and in this it could be distinguished from his other operations *ad extra*. Thus, what happens to this expression is what happens to most terms: they can always be used, provided that they are understood correctly. But we have merely been concerned with their justification here, which we have already seen is complete. Thus, despite the exaggerations that have been made by abusing these expressions, they have never been rejected by any true philosophy<sup>170</sup>—in keeping, on the other hand, with the more genuine concept of nature as the deepest and most intimate essence of a being. This is why God's creating action will be so intimate and intense for the being that it will be able to be called *naturare*.

<sup>168</sup> In his already mentioned article, "Über die Entstehung der Terme *natura naturans* und *natura naturata*."

<sup>169</sup> *De Div. Nom.* 6.

<sup>170</sup> I have found at least seven different places where St. Thomas uses this expression: see *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.1, c.; *In I Sent.*, dist.1, q.4, a.1, ad 1; *In IV Sent.*, d.49, q.3, a.1; q.1, c., etc.

Again, etymology helps to express the difference between God and the creatures. God is *naturans*, naturing more than nature, since He gives birth without having been born: properly speaking, God does not have a nature. The creature, on the other hand, is *naturata*, that is, born, created. That is to say that God and the creatures can be called nature by analogy, insofar as God gives birth and creatures have been born.

### Later Developments

#### *The Evolution of Nominalism*

The historical evolution of the nominalist point of view, at first an orthodox one, struggling against the menace of Platonic pantheism, once again proves that nominalism was only an external reaction to pantheism, but a reaction that did not overcome the fundamental attitude of its opponent. In fact, as time went by, nominalism once again adopted its latent pantheistic character. It is the nominalists who in the fifteenth century are once again captivated by Plato and neo-Platonic doctrines, and with their fondness for the things of the material world they fall into pantheism anew. In this way, the expression *natura naturans* is frequently used and, congruently to Platonism, this naturing action of God's is interpreted as a true emanation.<sup>171</sup> In nominalism, individual things are unconnected among themselves, with no other relationship than through God; but God becomes an increasingly superfluous hypothesis; they run the risk of turning Him into a "universal," devoid of meaning and, especially, of reality, as that from which all things hang. Thus, it is better to maintain the identification of God with all things themselves, since what these have of active and of being, they owe to God. And if God is not to become a pure *flatus vocis* as mere general name of the consistency and reality of all beings, He must be identical to those same things; He will be the *mens insita omnibus*<sup>172</sup> so that, if—from a nominalist point of view—He must be something, He can only be God.<sup>173</sup>

Because of the nominalist temperament itself, and especially because of the crisis of beliefs at the start of modern times, there is no full consciousness of the depth and transcendence of this pantheistic position, which is interpreted more as an expression of the unity and life of the cosmos. This is why the pantheistic tendency is, for the time being, satisfied with attributing a certain magical characteristic to nature, which it will never lose.<sup>174</sup> During this time period, the scientist is a kind of magician; and the alchemist, the astrologist, and the doctor are none other than people who pursue a vital force of nature that is symbolized in the search for the Philosopher's Stone that should not only turn the ignoble metals it comes into contact with into gold, but also cure sicknesses and provide dominion over the spirits.<sup>175</sup>

As time goes on, this recently acquired mythical character will grow weaker, but without ever recovering the old medieval meaning of nature, and thus science, for Bacon of Verulam, will be nothing more than an *interpretatio naturae*, a means to dominate it and put it in the

<sup>171</sup> Thus, *natura naturans* is for Francis Bacon a *fons emanationis* (*Novum Organum* II.1).

<sup>172</sup> Giordano Bruno, *De tripl. min.* I.1.

<sup>173</sup> "Idem est natura, quod Deus, aut fere idem" [Nature means the same as God, or nearly the same], says Lorenzo Valla, *De volupt.* I.13.

<sup>174</sup> This is authentic reason. One cannot say, as Eisler does in his *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe*, that "in the understanding of Renaissance philosophy of nature, nature as a higher place than the christian philosophy."

<sup>175</sup> With this, the Aristotelian roots of the philosophical stone and its relationship to his hylomorphic theory are not denied.

service of Man.<sup>176</sup> Specifically, the gradual loss of this mythical and arcane feature of nature will characterize progress in the physical and physico-mathematical sciences. And thus—against what is often repeated and has now become a cliché—modern science rejects the Renaissance concept of science, and not the medieval one.

But this is not the place to study the causes of this new change of interest, derived from different ways of seeing things.<sup>177</sup>

What we have here is a moment of transition toward a new criteriological interest, but also a period of great imprecision in language. Bacon, for example, calls the (Aristotelian) *forms of things natures*, and ends up interpreting them as (Platonic) *ideas*.<sup>178</sup>

### *Cartesian Rationalism*

Neither philosophy nor, much less, the history of philosophy ends with St. Thomas. The Thomist point of view versus the Augustinian one consisted in "substantivizing" the world and making it, to a certain point, independent of its Creator in all aspects. Things obviously depend on God; they have been created by Him; but creation is an act that produces *ad extra* effects, effects that in turn will be the instrumental causes of God, but true causes nonetheless. Secondary causes, but with an instrumentality, with regard to God, which is different from our mechanist concept of instrumental cause. God is the Lord, and when something is His instrument, it loses neither its freedom nor its dignity.

But just when Man becomes more aware of his own substantiality and independence, he accentuates the importance and transcendence of his most noble and autonomous function: knowledge. "The active function of knowledge is gradually emphasized"<sup>179</sup> until reaching Kant, for whom the spontaneity of the human mind is one of the foundations of his system. The prospect of Man's self-sufficiency is slowly introduced, first, without exaggerations, only in the cognitive field (we no longer need the theory of divine illumination in order to know), and later in the ontological field too. It is the deification of reason, which later deteriorates into irrationalism. The Christian feeling of the contingency and dependency of being is transformed into the consciousness of self-sufficiency and of an ontological and moral autonomy. However, we are not concerned here with the details of this evolution, but only with examining the beginning of its development in order to take advantage of its profound nucleus of truth.

Man, and all things with him, has been separating himself from God; we will, then, have to take more steps in order to get to know Him. We do not see things *in* God any longer, rather they merely contain a reflection of the divine idea, and this is why it is possible for reason to know things without knowing God. The *ratio essendi* is different from the *ratio cognoscendi*. In order to reach God there is no other path for *reason* than that of causality, and fundamentally that of efficient causality.

But if this conception (only partially Thomist) is exaggerated, and especially if it is interpreted from a nominalist point of view, the consequences are severe.

If nature as *species* is a *status vocis*, the only conclusion of God's creating action will be the individual, but—and this is the most important thing—the individual as individuality. Later philosophy feeds off this nominalist position, and when it has relinquished theology

<sup>176</sup> Bacon, *Novum Org.* I.129.

<sup>177</sup> For a development and a foundation of this idea, see my *Ontonomía de la Ciencia*, op. cit., 33ff.

<sup>178</sup> See *De Aug. Scient.* III.4.

<sup>179</sup> From my "La ciencia biomatemática," *Arbor* 3 (1944): 359.

and obtained full independence, a new mutation in the history of philosophy appears: the *ratio cognoscendi* not only differentiates itself from the *ratio essendi*, but it becomes completely independent from it, and very soon afterward, it acquires hegemony in order to later become exclusive.

What is nature, from this point of view? How can it be assimilated to what we have said up to here?

Knowledge of *how we can come* to understand the true nature of things will now be more interesting than knowledge of nature itself. But this methodological concern, which is characteristic of our time period, will insensibly modify the material content of the very concepts that it pursues.

What matters now is not the relationship of nature to God as its first cause, nor nature as the subject of material (phenomenal, as it is now called) change nor as the pure essence of things, but rather seeing how we can *attain* knowledge of these essences. This is the prior problem: before asking about things and their nature, we ask ourselves if we can know them and about the nature of this knowledge.

In fact, our spirit, in its reflexive stage, is presented with *thoughts* about things, not with the things themselves, and this is why it is necessary to investigate these thoughts, whatever position is adopted in the direct phase of knowledge. But the eternal problems of philosophy are still there, and they demand a solution.

Things change, beings move, some act a certain way and some another; however, this is not very exact. What Man immediately knows is that his ideas, representations, imaginations, and so on vary; but one cannot say anything about things without a very serious previous reflection, without an *ab ovo* analysis of one's own cognitive faculties. Nevertheless, Man is still interested in things and wants to found his thinking mechanism in order to be able to reach them. This is why he tries to organize his thoughts in order to free himself from error. Contemporary Man is panic-stricken by error: he knows that he is only sustained by his reason, he has put theology in a corner and he does not believe in tradition; if his understanding deceives him, he is lost. But this very caution is what leads him to failure.

Since his main interest is avoiding mistakes by revising human knowledge, Descartes eliminates all types of thoughts that are susceptible to deception, and he is left with his mere thinking "I." From this he will later try to extract the rest of his knowledge. The criteria of truth will be only that which his spirit sees clearly and distinctly. Something will be true, not if it is real and his mind coincides with it, but rather if the human spirit can understand it with clarity and distinction. Truth is de-ontologized in order to be on the same level as Man.<sup>180</sup> The latter will become the measure of all things (despite the harsh criticism to anthropomorphism).<sup>181</sup>

Ultimately, what Descartes does is ground the *esse* in the *cogitare*, which is nothing more than taking the nominalist and conceptualist positions of his time period to their ultimate consequences. Truth will not so much be the reality of things as the reality that is in itself knowable; but I should only attribute reality to those thoughts of *mine* that are clear and distinct, since I cannot guarantee the truth of the rest of them.<sup>182</sup> That is to say, that of which I am sure, certain, really *is*. A deep *desire for security* is what forces Descartes to not recognize as reality that which, for whatever reason, one may doubt. But from here, he—falsely—deduces

<sup>180</sup> One of Descartes's disciples seriously says that that which one cannot understand cannot be made. And modern science will affirm that that which is not measurable does not exist.

<sup>181</sup> See, for example, the Appendix to Spinoza's *Ethics*.

<sup>182</sup> Descartes, *III Medit.*

that that of which one is not sure, of which one does not have an idea, *is not*. Only that which is conceived clearly and distinctly is true. The leap is obvious: when the criteria of truth is identified with that of certainty, that which is certain will be considered true, and whatever one cannot be certain of will be eliminated as false. That which is clear and distinct is the criteria for truth because it is so for certainty. What logically follows is that which is seen with clarity and distinction will be true because it is certain; but it does not follow that that which is not seen with clarity and distinction cannot be true, or necessarily has to be false. Anyway, maintaining that certainty is the *only* criteria of truth is a metaphysical position that Descartes himself would not have admitted.

Nature will be *formaliter* understood, as it had been up until then, as that invariable and immutable reality that constitutes the true essence of these things; but "essence" will only be the knowable fragment of the thing, which will be increasingly declared smaller and weaker. This is why, for Descartes, the true nature of all material things will be extension, and that of spiritual things, thought. All English philosophy of this period consists of a curious restriction of the dominion of the true nature of beings.

And yet, despite all this, the formal concept of nature as something immutable and essential remains the same. Furthermore: Descartes explicitly asks himself what must be understood as nature, and he distinguishes one far-reaching concept and another more limited one.<sup>183</sup> In the first he considers "nature" as a synonym for God, or for the order and disposition of created things, so that he shows his dependence on the concept of nature in style during the Renaissance. In the second, he understands nature as the set of things that have been attributed "to me" by God and that my mind knows as such, despite the "sickness and weakness of our nature."<sup>184</sup>

It is undeniable that Descartes was looking for something more; he was searching after a metaphysical experience, an intellectual intuition in which things were given in their own reality by virtue of their own presence, and this is the characteristic of his *cogito* as a complex experience and intuition of his thinking self. But he quickly extrapolates and declares that whatever he sees with the same clarity and distinction will be true, will be the truth. He has gone from clarity and distinction of the intellectual intuition in the *cogito* to clarity and distinction as subjective—although universal—criteria of truth.

The cultural milieu we described earlier is what leads him to formulate the problem in this manner, and to take a jump without realizing it. His method is that of safety, but his intention goes deeper.

This is not the place to expose and criticize so-called modern philosophy. We are merely interested in capturing its peculiar attitudes so that we may enhance the concept of nature with a new shade of meaning. In this way, this concept becomes more and more precise, given that the connotations that are presented in this chapter are nothing more than aspects of the same fundamental concept.

From the point of view of the theory of knowledge, thus, nature appears under a new aspect that is also in line with the ones mentioned earlier and implicit in Thomism. The concept of nature emerged because the human mind tried to explain the paradox of change to itself; from the beginning, Man was looking for something that might make things *intelligible*—and this new, noetic era will pay special attention to this peculiarity. Nature is that

<sup>183</sup> The Latin text says *strictius*, so that it appears that this second concept is the more precise one; but the French text speaks of "une signification plus *rasserrée*," from where we deduce that it is simply about a conception that is more limited—and not more "strict" in the current meaning of the word.

<sup>184</sup> *Meditat. VI.*

which things *really are* just as my mind discovers them, since otherwise I would not be able to *think* them: this is what the Greeks believe with their identification (complete, in some systems) between Being and Thinking. The precise distinction between *ratio essendi* and *ratio cognoscendi* comes later: nature will become the essence of the things I know, which will coincide—although not in a complete and absolute way (the problem of universals)—with beings themselves. And, finally, with the hegemony of thinking over being, nature will be that which our thought necessarily predicates of things in order for these to be intelligible. The last step in this direction will be taken when the total subordination of being to thinking is defended: nature is the rational creation of our mind, or of an objective superhuman Spirit.

### *The Idealist Evolution*

The basis for idealism has already been set. Since there is nothing left by virtue of which an objective and immutable reality may be the subject of change, nature will become that human mental construction that ascribes to things those characteristics of stability and order without which we would not even be able to think them. It will become the existence of things insofar as they are determined by general laws; it will become the representation of things in our soul.<sup>185</sup> This is why *a priori* knowledge of nature is only possible if the intellect dictates the laws by which nature must abide.<sup>186</sup> Furthermore, nature itself is a fiction of our minds<sup>187</sup>—even if Kant sometimes uses the expression “nature of things” as a translation of *natura rerum* in the realist meaning, and in this sense speaks of it as something inexhaustible for our knowledge.<sup>188</sup> This is why he will not begin with an investigation about things, but rather about the intellect that knows them. This conception suits both Kantian idealism as well as the materialism of a *Système de la Nature* where it is held that all of the order and purpose of nature is only in the human spirit, since nature is only a motion of atoms. In Hegelian terms: Nature turns into Spirit.

Kant will speak of nature many times in the sense we have indicated, yet very few times does he ask himself explicitly what nature is. He does once, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he speaks of the relationship between the words “world” and “nature.”<sup>189</sup> For him, the former means the mathematical totality of all phenomena and the totality of their synthesis. The latter means the same world insofar as it is considered as a dynamic whole in the unity of phenomena in existence, and he distinguishes the formal concept, or “adjective,” from the material or “substantive” one.

This concept will become more and more objectified within idealism itself, and it will acquire an absolute value as the same principle from which all beings emerge. Nature thus becomes, in Schelling, the objective system of reason. Nature is the “I” insofar as it becomes.<sup>190</sup>

If for *rationalism* nature is purely that which is not Man, the realm of inert matter, the subject of Newton’s physics, for *Romanticism* it is the Mother of everything and the place where God, Man, and matter converge. Nature is the internal and equal unity of all things; it is a living organism that originates activity in all beings from within. A full knowledge of it can never be reached by Man, as he is an integral part of it.

<sup>185</sup> See Kant, *Prolegom.* 14 and 36.

<sup>186</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, p. 52 of the second German edition.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>188</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, Introduction, 7.

<sup>189</sup> In the section on the *System of Cosmological Ideas*.

<sup>190</sup> See Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*.

For Fichte, God will not even be *natura naturans*, a condition that is labeled as dogmatic, but rather *ordo ordinans*. And for Hegel, Nature will be the Son of God,<sup>191</sup> the exteriority of the Idea, and an intermediate step in the evolution of the Spirit; that is, the Spirit "for itself" (*für sich*) will be Nature insofar as it becomes "other" or alienated from itself. It is obvious that any objectification of Nature will be God;<sup>192</sup> it will be "the living garb of divinity,"<sup>193</sup> even if it is sometimes referred to as Will<sup>194</sup> or with other names. Nature, be it in the realist order or in the idealist one, continues to be the same thing: the absolute of things.

Later on, there will be an attempt to make use of this new vision by speaking of nature as a rational structure of reality. This was the great lesson of idealism. It is useful to try to describe it for a moment, even if only in a schematic and general way.

In particular, one of the "magical words" that more profoundly intervenes in the idealist evolution is that of nature. Nature and Spirit are the two great realities that tackle each other face-to-face, until the former succumbs to the latter.

It is true that, here, the word "nature" has a different meaning from that which the realists will later give it and from that which the Greeks had given it. To put it more exactly, the idealist point of view wished to concentrate the entire Hellenic legacy in this word. On the other hand, the Spirit is taken to be the Christian discovery par excellence.<sup>195</sup> This is why it is a struggle to the death, which can only end with the victory of one of them. It is the triumph of Hegel.

However, the Absolute Spirit can only dialogue with itself for a short time. The Cartesian *cogito* claims a *cogitatum* (Husserl), and even if this can still be interpreted from an idealist point of view, it is, all in all, different from pure thought. The solitary "I" demands its "circumstance" (Ortega y Gasset). Thinking finds itself outside of things, and not the other way around (Heidegger). The regional ontology of the spiritual being is completely different from that of the material being (Nicolai Hartmann). There is a third metaphor,<sup>196</sup> which goes along with the loneliness of spirit of a Man left without a world and without God (Zubiri). There is an irreducible diversity between primary objects (Siegfried Behn). That Being is analogous is what these statements ultimately assert.

### *Nature in Idealism*

But this is not the problem we are interested in here; rather, we wish to show the idea of nature as it was developed by idealism.

It has almost become a cliché to say that the Greek anthropological vision considered Man to be one more thing among many, and that, on the other hand, the vision of idealist philosophy consisted in only seeing Man, his spirit, and what we call the external world inserted within him. These are Ortega y Gasset's two famous metaphors. The overcoming of idealism can also occur by means of a third metaphor, which considers Man "neither a piece of the universe, nor even its virtual enveloping surface . . . but rather simply as being the authentic, the true light of things."<sup>197</sup> Leaving the elucidation of this problem for anthropology and

<sup>191</sup> As Hegel affirms at the beginning of his *Philosophy of Nature*.

<sup>192</sup> "Deus sive natura": Spinoza, *Ethics I*, prop. 21.

<sup>193</sup> Goethe, *Faust I*.

<sup>194</sup> Schopenhauer, *Parerga II.6.71*.

<sup>195</sup> See Zubiri, *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios*, op. cit., 286.

<sup>196</sup> See here below.

<sup>197</sup> Zubiri, op. cit., 299–300.

abstaining from declaring whether or not idealism has been overcome by the third metaphor, the truth is that this proposal fully represents the idealist view on nature.

The process by which the Spirit has subsumed Nature has lasted centuries, from Descartes until Hegel to be precise. Therefore, until the apparition of the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* during the first years of the nineteenth century,<sup>198</sup> nature possessed a certain, real existence even for idealism, although this was inconsequently founded.

When Descartes established the schism of the entire world into *res extensas* and *res cogitantes* and he acknowledged extension and thinking as their two respective attributes, he laid the foundation for the duality between nature and spirit, and at the same time, he undermined the base of the former. In fact, only what declares itself—and does so distinctly—to the intellect will be "true," given that this is the only way it will be able to have the required immediateness for the certainty and security of the truth to which it aspires. But if extension is irreducible to thinking, it will soon cease to find a foundation on which to lay the justification of its existence. English philosophers recognized this immediately. Malebranche and Spinoza maintain the building afoot because God grants it the firmness they already have in themselves, as had occurred before with Descartes. But all sorts of realist interpretations of the problem crumble and are worn away in Kant; and to reach Hegel we will only have to draw out the last consequences. "Taking the idea of the *logos* to the Cartesian conception of the thinking spirit is enough to obtain all of Hegel's metaphysics."<sup>199</sup> This is why nature, for Hegel, can only be the Spirit itself insofar as it is "other," that is, insofar as it becomes and crystallizes by virtue of its own internal dynamism.

So, ultimately, what is understood by nature is the actual base of all the reality that is not spirit, however their mutual relationship is afterward interpreted. Idealist nature is Greek φύσις, though transferred to the human mind and founded by virtue of being an authentic emanation of the Spirit; but since for idealism the Spirit is reality, nature continues to be reality, although not the same as the "things" in the common and traditional sense of the word.

The ethical idea of nature goes along with this metaphysical conception. Natural religion and natural law are two of the eighteenth century's main themes, and Rousseau's "goodness of nature" transcended the limits of a philosophical conception.

#### *The Irrationalist Reaction*

With the fall of absolute idealism, the concept of nature will recover the different meanings that philosophy had wanted to bring together perforce. But in this reaction, each one of the attributes of the concept will distance itself and become excessively independent from the rest. Each science will have its own notion of nature—more or less precise—usually without being too worried about defining it with regard to the other fields. In any case, the idea that the diverse spheres of reality are autonomous will become ever more important—and the question of nature will emerge in each one of them. The problems of the "nature of the sciences" and of the "sciences of nature" are characteristic of the modern world.

The idealist exaggeration of the absolute character of nature is followed by a process of disintegration represented by the (apparent) abolition of this character. It is the common background of irrationalism. The latter emerges, paradoxically, from a hypertrophy of reason, which—believing itself to be prepared to solve the pressing problems of human life that, strictly speaking, are not of its concern, and experiencing its own inability to solve these

<sup>198</sup> In 1807.

<sup>199</sup> Zubiri, op. cit., 298.

problems—is substituted by some *function* or another that acts in its stead. Ultimately, turning to the irrational (of whatever type it is, feeling, life, existence, etc.) is conditioned by the search for something absolute in the face of the disparity among the *rational* conceptions of the world. But a dialectic that is immanent to things themselves does not allow Man to lean on something absolute outside of his intellect. Thus, for example, the support that is looked for disappears as an absolute foundation and turns into a relativism that can only have the appearance of consistency within an individualist nominalism. The formal search for the absolute only finds a relative—material—support. This is why we said that the abolition of the absolute character of nature is so merely in appearance, given that, even if it is not the last, true foundation, its—formal—aspiration is to be so.<sup>200</sup>

For example, because of the conceptual divergence among the different philosophical systems, one may turn to *life* as the origin of all that is human. This attempt also tends toward the absolute, toward unification. But in choosing life as the foundation of everything else, we have toppled with relativism because, if we have to discard the possibility of any rational interpretation and we have to capture its immediate reality (not inferred by reason as of its manifestations), only the mere flowing, the pure individualized motion is left.<sup>201</sup> The nature of things is then radically individual, and it constitutes its own flow, without support of any sort. Nature is pure becoming, things are mere motion.

Intimately connected to the irrational systems, though within an order where they have their own *raison d'être*, we find the artistic conceptions of nature. In these, it is common to speak of the *feeling of nature*, where nature is understood as the entire world, as an organic cosmos that is full of meaning and which is grasped in its entirety by some sort of vital sympathy with the Whole. Much has been written on this subject, but it is enough to point it out here, since it goes beyond the proper limits of this study.

Notwithstanding—and this is the only thing that really matters here—a certain pretension of universal validity and absolutization of the results is also inevitable at this point. The nature of things is that which they possess that is most intimate and peculiar, and from which their different activities emerge.

#### *Max Scheler and Berdyaev*

It is perhaps appropriate to dedicate our attention for a moment to a conception of nature that considers itself religious (Max Scheler) or even Christian (Berdyaev).

Max Scheler, who on occasions has been considered a Christian interpreter of the problems of modern philosophy, maintains a conception of nature founded on a *Weltanschauung* in which "the primary order which exists between the superior and inferior forms of being"<sup>202</sup> is characterized by the following axiom: "Originally, the inferior is powerful; the superior, impotent."<sup>203</sup> As an explanation, he adds that "all superior forms of being are, with regard to inferior ones, relatively inert and are not fulfilled by their own power, but rather through the power of inferior ones."<sup>204</sup> It would have been convenient if Scheler had more accurately defined the inferior and the superior, since their meaning is full of the hierarchical order of

<sup>200</sup> See on this problem my *F. H. Jacobi y la filosofía del sentimiento*, op. cit.

<sup>201</sup> Thus Dilthey calls the permanent and vital root of personality *Selbigkeit* (literally: selfness) in order to avoid the rigid and substantialist concept of *Identität*.

<sup>202</sup> Max Scheler, *El puesto del hombre en el cosmos* (Madrid, 1929), 103.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

Scholastic philosophy. But even if we admit a favorable interpretation, besides the fact that he speaks of "gradation" and of "increasingly higher grades"<sup>205</sup> in a purely traditional sense, one cannot help seeing the confusion between the *base* of an operation of superior order, which generally belongs to an inferior order, and its dynamic *foundation* (its *raison d'être*); between what is "exclusively carried out by means of the matter and power of the inorganic world,"<sup>206</sup> such as, for example, in the "process of life," and what is carried out *through* these forces, such as even experimental psychology has to admit. The spirit (the soul, the form, as we should say, following Aristotle) is the factor that forms the body.

Life here on earth presupposes organic matter, same as sensibility presupposes the former and rationality the latter. But to serve as a basis—"as a mattress," as the French language graphically puts it—does not mean that the power needed to produce and cause the superior forms of being lies in it. How can the (impotent!) spirit have the power to overcome the biological side?

We can thus understand how he can say that "the spirit does not possess its own energy, either by nature or originally"<sup>207</sup> and that "the most powerful thing in the world are the centers of force of the inorganic world,"<sup>208</sup> that is, the blind and "originally diabolic" impulse.<sup>209</sup> Scheler even turns to current theoretical physics<sup>210</sup> in order to give a foundation to this priority of chaos<sup>211</sup> and to the impulse over order and hierarchy, but he relies on an excessively elemental and superficial conception of the statistical laws of physics. Anyway, we are not interested in criticizing this opinion here—which, on the other hand, would be quite easy, because it is not clear at all<sup>212</sup> whether from his chair in Cologne, from 1922 to 1928, he did "repeatedly and extensively expose the results of [his] investigations, by far overcoming the foundations indicated above."<sup>213</sup> What we are interested in is understanding the role of nature as an effect of God within this order of ideas, since Scheler has influenced several current philosophers, and even constitutes a characteristic example of modern philosophical thought.

Nature in this conception is not properly a creation of God's since, if the Divinity is Spirit, "and the latter is lacking any kind of positive and creating power,"<sup>214</sup> then certainly "the idea of a creation from nothing yields in face of this consequence."<sup>215</sup> Nature will be more like the crystallization of the finite becoming, understanding the latter as "a mutual interpenetration of the spirit—originally impotent—with the originally demonic impulse."<sup>216</sup> There is, then, a real dualism, "an original antagonism between spirit and impulse"<sup>217</sup> that will allow us to interpret finite nature as a sort of fulfillment of the *natura naturans* of the

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> According to the personal testimony of several of his disciples and listeners.

<sup>213</sup> Scheler, op. cit., 15. Surely there was a greater attention and development of these problems in his magnificent classes in that university, of which there was a living recollection yet, as of 1936; but not an *overcoming* of the foundations we have indicated here.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 109.

*supreme being*,<sup>218</sup> which is nothing more than "the omnipotent and image-laden impulse."<sup>219</sup> This is why God fulfills Himself through and by means of this fulfillment of the world. Ultimately, this is the resuscitation of the neo-Plotinian Gnostic vision. Nature is an emanation of the creating impulse of the universe.

And the verification of this latent pantheistic characteristic is confirmed by the reversibility that is shown in Scheler's affirmations, so that God may be seen as a function of Man, as an ontological constitutive of Man. Scheler precisely says that the "sphere of an Absolute Being belongs to the essence of Man as constitutively as the consciousness of himself and the consciousness of the world,"<sup>220</sup> since these three consciousnesses—of oneself, of the world, and of God—"form an indestructible structural unity."<sup>221</sup> And let it not be said that this idea can be understood saving a God that is personal and different from the world, since Scheler himself explicitly denies and rejects "the theistic supposition of a spiritual and personal God, omnipotent in His spirituality"<sup>222</sup>—and in this he is much more consistent than his interpreters. "It is the old idea by Spinoza, Hegel, and many others,"<sup>223</sup> whose sole reform consists in not "interpreting it in an excessively intellectualist mode."<sup>224</sup> It is the idea of "an imperfect God," of a God who is "becoming,"<sup>225</sup> thanks to Man who is "part of the struggle for Divinity, and its *co-author*."<sup>226</sup> Nature is the sole possessor of two attributes that are equally essential in a continuous becoming and perfecting (even when this cannot be explained): the spirit and the impulse.

Scheler deserves credit for one thing: having taken the modern point of view to its logical conclusion, without fearing to confront the religious problem, which constantly concerned him.

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This doctrine is expressed even more clearly—because it is stated more powerfully and with more metaphysical ambition—by Berdyaev, who was undoubtedly influenced by Scheler. They both develop, or, better said, they both make general statements about being and nature when they speak of Man, as both of them aim at establishing an anthropology.

For Berdyaev, nature could be considered as the confluence of two principles, of which only one comes from God, that is, the *being* of finite nature; but this being finds itself with "created nothingness,"<sup>227</sup> which in fact is a participation of the uncreated which "precedes beings and the creation of the world"<sup>228</sup> and which, strictly speaking, is "uncreated freedom, the non-being that comes before the being":<sup>229</sup> "meonic,"<sup>230</sup> "abyss"<sup>231</sup> which is not the Creator, but rather a transcendental principle that is different from Him.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> N. Berdyaev, *De la destination de l'homme* (Paris, 1935), 78.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> From the Greek *mē-on* (*μή ον*), non-being. [Ed. note.]

<sup>231</sup> Berdyaev, *De la destination de l'homme*.

There is room here for a mystical relationship with God, especially in Man—who for Berdyaev comes before being<sup>232</sup>—since this original freedom, which nobody has determined and which is submerged in the abyss of the μη ον, can either fulfill or annihilate the principle that is determined by the “image and likeness to God.”<sup>233</sup>

### Nature in Physico-Mathematical Science

#### *The Nature of Bodies*

The most important cultural phenomenon of the past decades has been the emergence of modern science, or the physical sciences in the full definition of this expression. And, as their very name implies, nature—φύσις—plays a paramount role in them. Modern science represents the last step in the evolution of the concept of nature.

Historically, at the end of the Middle Ages, the fertility of a method of approaching things that had been quite neglected until then emerges. The temptation, in which the incipient era later succumbed, consisted in wanting to substitute this quantitative, mathematical, method for the already existing one, which was qualitative, philosophical, instead of placing them next to each other for a fuller apprehension of reality.<sup>234</sup> Science wished to replace philosophy instead of complementing it. The nominalist premises, prevalent during that time period, were the cause of the substitution, instead of limiting themselves to providing a complementary quantitative impulse. And nothing else was needed, as quantitative science had already been known since antiquity, although it was not called *physics*, but rather *astronomy*. The study of the relationship between science and philosophy was then acknowledged under the title of the connections between astronomy and physics.

As modern culture has been abandoning philosophical knowledge and penetrating into the scientific vision of things, it has gradually lost consciousness of the bias of this outlook, and it has ended up believing that it represents a complete vision of things and, therefore, that it is the only vision. The authentic nature of beings would be discovered in this vision. The concealment of reality takes place by virtue of the gnoseologic premises of Cartesianism. Since only what is clearly and distinctly seen is considered to be true, and the most manifest, clear, and distinct visions for Man are those that come from a simplification of things and their reduction to the intelligible, the quantitative, nature will thus come to be confused with what modern science, physico-mathematics, discovers. Nature will then be considered the quantitative framework of reality and, consequently, insofar as it is reduced to quantity, it will be considered completely intelligible. This is the beginning of scientism. Nature is quantity, or that which can be reduced to it, since only the quantifiable can be assimilated (is intelligible) through the methods used by science (measurement) to approach reality.<sup>235</sup>

However, because of the disappointments suffered in the very core of science, and because of the influence of Man's metaphysical instinct, and as the fruit of a realist and metaphysical philosophy, a new, more complete vision of the world starts to make its way, which considers the sphere pertaining to science as only one aspect of a complex reality.<sup>236</sup>

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>233</sup> See ibid., 75ff.

<sup>234</sup> See an analysis of the birth of modern science and its premises in my *Ontonomía de la ciencia*, op. cit., 33–70.

<sup>235</sup> See a more in-depth study of the problem that is outlined here, based on a specific case, in my “El indeterminismo científico,” *Anales de Física y Química* 396 (1945): 573ff.

<sup>236</sup> See my “La entropía y el fin del mundo (un problema de cosmología),” *Revista de Filosofía* 13 (1945).

For science, nature is a set of fundamental structures of a regularity that it is possible to capture mathematically, as only this regularity allows us to predict an equal and constant behavior at each moment once certain conditions are met. That is to say, what is called nature is the immutable and active core of things according to their most simple formal concept.

For science, without bearing in mind its later connection to philosophy, nature is the mathematical law of reality, as the structure that this law supposes is that which is immutable and permanent. In other words, science constitutes the plane of intersection between our minds, our thinking about things according to a specific method, and things themselves; it grasps those parts of reality that allow the human intellect full assimilation in its specific function of measuring. By expressing the state of the question in this manner, we can understand the idealist interpretations of science, since in order to reach the nature of things we must first reach the point where they fully submit to thought, and it is very tempting to interpret this submission like a projection of the human intellect itself that bestows order, connection, and universality to the chaos that is the external world—when it is not giving it its very being and existence.

However, this interpretation is not necessary; on the contrary, the latest scientific discoveries (relativity, quantum physics, undulatory mechanics, etc.) have proven that there is an internal regularity in things that refutes our a prioristic concepts on beings and their categories. Nature is very real and cannot be transgressed. Discussing this would imply tackling all the current cosmological problems, but this is not the place to go into this specifically.

From a philosophical standpoint, examining the work that science carries out, we can say that the physical sciences, by virtue of their specific methodology, capture *one aspect of nature*.

Modern physical science is not mathematical science; nevertheless, it is formally mathematical, even if materially it is “physical” in the classical and traditional sense of the word. This is why modern science only captures that which is mathematically expressible in the physical being, that is, the quantitative aspect of reality. Yet the material being, the object of physical science, possess quantity as the first accident of its substance. And this is the ontic sphere that science captures: *quantity*, or better yet, the *quantifiable*, without considering its connections to the substance of the material being to which it is constitutively relates as accident. This is precisely what sets it apart from cosmology, which does not disconnect quantity from its subject.

It is perhaps convenient to mention some of the physical sciences here, even if just incidentally.

Throughout time there have, in fact, been several and very different sciences that have applied themselves to the same subject, that is, to nature as cosmos. In ancient times—leaving magic and the esoteric sciences of nature of a religious character aside—the different sciences themselves considered philosophy as the only universal science of nature in its totality. But very soon, the vision of this “first science” concentrated so much on the being of the cosmos that, penetrating through the surface and the first layers of the universe, it moved forward until reaching the central core of the problems, and remained there definitively. It was then, when philosophy found its own subject, that other sciences emerged to seize the fields it had abandoned. This is how the particular sciences are born. But, in its journey through the surface, philosophy left a perennial trail: cosmology, which will always continue to be the link between metaphysics, which deals with the profound, and the different sciences that remain on the surface.

These diverse, nascent sciences are empirical at first, and they thrive thanks to their symbiosis with cosmology. They study the qualitative and quantitative accidents of material

substances. This is how astronomy, music, astrology, alchemy, botany, medicine, and others are born. Furthermore, toward the end of the Middle Ages, mathematics begins to substitute for cosmology in the direction and dominion of the physical sciences, and with this begins the new era of the physico-mathematical sciences, which culminates in our current times.

There are, therefore, three types of sciences that inform us about cosmic nature. The error would lie in excluding any one of them. The *empirical physical sciences*, as the least important, catalogue the different parts of nature, specially attending to the category of quality. The *physico-mathematical sciences* attend to quantity; and *cosmology* to the substance of the sensible being. We must understand this distinction correctly: cosmology certainly also deals with quality and quantity, but as accidents of the material substance, while physico-mathematics, for example, penetrates into the quantitative realm completely disregarding whether it is an accident of the substance of the sensible being.

Scientific nature is, thus, one aspect of the true and total nature of material things.

#### *The Despoliation of Substance*

Nonetheless, the dissolving process of physical science does not stop here. Science will agree to yield dominion of the kingdom of the spirit to philosophy, but it does not tolerate being replaced by anything else in the sphere of the material being.

Science establishes the dilution of the material into mathematical intelligibility. It denies that its statements about nature have an ordinary meaning, because it does not allow them to be interpreted as accidents of a substantial substrate whose existence it rejects. This substrate was postulated insofar as it was needed to explain phenomenal behavior, but now science expects to do away with it completely. In addition, pure intelligibility does not appear until this atavistic metaphysical residue is abandoned. Hence, when physics has wanted to work out an ontology of ether, it has found that it could not exist, as its very existence proved contradictory.

Modern science has seen that it can only progress by abandoning the idea of being able to explain the reality that appears before the eyes of the common people. In order to be able to measure and predict phenomena, it has had to renounce to any explanation; it has had to do without the realist paradigms and to strip physical phenomena of all of their naive reality in order to turn them into pure mathematical intelligibility. Science limits itself to applying a mathematical method to measurable reality.

But since Man, no matter how scientific he may be, cannot rid himself of the metaphysical impulse—the most profound impulse of his intellect—he has no choice but to give himself an explanation. This explanation obviously depends on his prior philosophical way of thinking, whether it is conscious or unconscious, explicit or implicit. And we also see here the fecundity of the dynamism of Being.

The two extreme conceptions, Heraclitean and Parmenidean, are untenable. Only a third hypothesis remains. The human mind cannot cease to sustain its vision of reality on something substantial. Even if only matter is the subject of the verb "to vibrate" (according to the well-known modern definition), a subject is necessarily needed. There is no vibration without something that vibrates. The despoliation of substance carried out by science cannot eliminate the existence of a subject—of a *substratum* of physical reality, ultimately. In other words, the scientific explanation of reality either "substantivizes" the merely quantitative results of current investigations, and becomes an unsustainable Heraclitism, or—if this proves to be inadequate—it hypostatizes these same results into a static and Parmenidean concept of substance, and so an idealist interpretation of reality gains way. However, there is a third possibility, which is the integration of scientific results in a realist, but dynamic and active, vision of being, without falling into any Heraclitean dissolution.

Even if it is still premature, in our current scientific progress, to make science reflect on itself, it does ultimately seem that what science has discovered in its quantitative dimension is an analogous process to that which a dynamic metaphysics has performed in the substantial order: to discover the eminently active character of Being in any of its dimensions.

Let us not forget that physics is not pure mathematics. Even if it tends to find the mathematical invariants that rationally explain the phenomenal *behavior* of things, this does not cause it to renounce to explaining reality to itself. And by diluting substance in quantity, what it aspires to do is alleviate it from the intelligible immobility of "matter" in order to emphasize its dynamic dimension.

Physical matter is intrinsically active, and any elemental body is only where it acts—because it *is* its very action. The old notion of "presence in potency, in act," generally applied to divine omnipotence, is now used by physics to say that everybody *is* up to where its field of influence extends. Theoretically, within a conveniently limited sphere (quantum theory), everybody *is* in the whole field. Current physics, by reminding us of matter's dynamism, takes us closer to the activist conception of being and shows us, in the corporeal world, a reflection and an analogical law that is similar to the one that governs the realm of the spiritual being.

This is what we are now going to prove with an example.

#### *The Motion of Bodies*

One of the most radical results of current physics, which actually reinforces the *metaphysical* conception of bodies, lies in the scientific conviction of the *intrinsic* activity of material beings. Philosophically, the concept of inertia must be revised, and physically, it is not opposed to the idea that the motion of a body may go on indefinitely.

Strictly speaking, current physics does not venture to say which kind of "being" may belong to the invariants that it adduces in order to explain physical phenomena. But this does not stop it from suggesting, on the one hand, a "naïve" interpretation of corporeal matter, such as the one of some elemental corpuscles in motion; on the other hand, it also cannot deny that there exists a final stronghold of the physical being that can only be expressed in equations of motion. Physics will not tell us what it is that is moving, but it will defend that at the core of the material being there is motion.

Physics' demonstrations in the mathematical sphere possess a merely analogical value in the sphere of substance. What follows must be understood in this sense.

If current physics reduces everything to functional mathematical values, it appears to be absolutely sure that it cannot admit any elemental body in repose. That, in fact, would mean that the body neither exercises any force nor is any force exercised on it since, if a physical action is fulfilled, it is only comprehensible by means of motion. Thus concretely, for physics, an electron *is* its own motion. A completely static body is something physics cannot accept. This movement, this continuous *fieri*, is precisely that which physico-mathematical science suggests as the ultimate structure of the material world, that which has contributed to the elimination of the substance understood as static *substratum*, inert and useless, incapable of explaining physical motion. Physical science does not separate what matter *is* from what matter *does*; it considers that things *are* what they *do*. And a body *is* where it *acts*.

Classical physics considers motion as something merely external to the body that moves, always by virtue of a received impulse. Current physics, on the other hand, has had to suggest not only that motion is inherent to bodies, but also that it is constitutive to them. It has reduced everything to motion, even the substantiality of matter itself. The *scientific* equivalence between energy and matter, undulatory packs and elemental particles, is well known.

At first glance, it seems that admitting an intrinsic motion in bodies means crumbling the entire Scholastic edifice that distinguishes the living being from the inert one precisely by means of this characteristic.<sup>237</sup> But if we look at it correctly, there is absolutely no difficulty in admitting a fact that philosophy presupposes and that, on the other hand, physics presents as incontrovertible.

As a matter of fact, the motion of physical beings is nothing but a very external and material manifestation, but a manifestation nonetheless, of the profound dynamism of being. What distinguishes the diverse spheres of being is not the fact that some of them possess motion and others do not, but rather the different types of motion they possess, since their motion is precisely their ontological constitution.

If a material being only moves because of another, and living beings are the only ones that move themselves, all motion of bodies would have to come from living beings and be maintained by them, and this goes against science and experience. In order to avoid this difficulty, in medieval times the existence of a motionless Empyrean heaven plus other heavens that received and transmitted movement was conjectured, thus explaining the motion of sublunar bodies. Furthermore, the peculiar characteristic of all created beings in face of God's immutability was, precisely, motion.<sup>238</sup> And everybody possessed a determined natural motion that belonged to the very nature of that body.

The nature of everybody is precisely the principle of its specific motion; and because everybody moves with its own individual motion, we can then say that everybody possesses a nature. Motion is received with being itself. This is the profound consequence to which current physics arrives, in complete harmony with the metaphysical vision of nature, and in disagreement—of course—with the medieval conception of a physical universe.

The distinction of inert bodies toward living beings still remains in keeping with the traditional idea, which, the more it is examined, even in light of modern biology, the more incontrovertible it seems. Intrinsic motion is one thing; an immanent motion is another.<sup>239</sup> The former has the principle of motion in itself. The latter, in addition, also has the *end* of the same motion in itself. The former is constitutive of being; the latter is, in addition, terminative.

Consequently, immanent motion presupposes a perfecting of the being that moves: the power—in the substance that possesses it—to admit new perfections within itself. And this is precisely the essential characteristic of the living being: *assimilation*. The living substance is capable of this substantial incorporation, which the nonliving being is not. The reason lies in that the living substance has a consistency of its own, independent of its accidents: a feature that the inanimate substance does not possess. In traditional terminology, they said that the substantial form of matter is exhausted in its mere “in-forming” function, while that of the living being possesses greater potentiality. This ability lies in a function that can sustain the new modalities as they come up. We should note that assimilation is the vital, elemental function, and that the rest of the functions presuppose it: growth, reproduction, and so on.

Inanimate bodies possess the principle of their motion in themselves, which obviously means intrinsicism, but not real immanence. The motion of the bodies is transient. Therefore,

<sup>237</sup> The surprising Aristotle, who St. Thomas claims to rectify (*In De Anima* II, lect. 1.219), characterizes life independently of intrinsic motion, but on the basis of food, growth, and diminution (*De an.*, II.1 [412a14]).

<sup>238</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.9, a.2.

<sup>239</sup> “Illa proprie sunt viventia, quae seipsa secundum aliquam speciem motus movent” [Properly living are (only) those things that move themselves with a certain type of motion], says Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.18, a.1.

even in the case of the most natural motion, that is, the circular one, there is an extrinsic action, a field, an influence that is external to the being that moves. There is no physical motion without a field of action.

It is commonly held, when lightly considering the traditional cosmological response, that the living being moves itself while the inanimate body is always moved by another. If the motion of one body is in another, then the latter possesses the principle of motion of the former; this, however, does nothing but transfer the difficulty. And let it not be said that the classical *prima via* (the first path) for the demonstration of the existence of God lies in this, because it also includes living beings, who do not comply with the condition here mentioned.

Let us not forget that the famous Aristotelian principle "Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur"<sup>240</sup> is formulated on the metaphysical level.

### *Scientific Spiritualism*

We can learn another important lesson from current science. Its own concept of corporeal being gives us, by contrast, an idea of the superior substantive reality of spiritual nature.

Science's reflection on the material being, even if interpreted substantially and as a corroboration of the dynamic character of being, helps us to glimpse the tenuous reality and minimum consistency of bodies. The body is certainly a substance, but a substance that hardly has consistency. The application, although analogical, of the characteristics of the spiritual substance (the person) to the corporeal being has given the latter excessive importance. Science, on the other hand, in its efforts to understand the body in itself, from beneath, has made us see the Scholastic and post-Cartesian exaggeration; it has helped us eliminate one last anthropomorphic residue.

The material world is little less than a set of accidents sustained in a substance that does not possess itself (this would be the characteristic of the person) but, rather, only sustains accidents. In a sense, science is right when it reduces the value of corporeal substance with regard to its accidents. This is why those substances are deciduous and perishable. Only spiritual substance is immortal, and possesses its own strength independently of its accidents; consequently, it is the only one that *is*. Bare corporeal "substance" is not; it merely upholds, *su(b)stains*. Between the spirit's *being* and matter's *being* there is only analogy; in order to go from one to the other we must follow an ontological degradation.

While the Scholastic vision used to consider the material world from above, as of the human being, with an inevitable psychological projection onto matter (a typical example is the concept of force), the scientific vision illuminates the world from below, disregarding any anthropomorphic contamination. The first vision allows us to better understand the similarity between the material world and the kingdom of the spirit and, ultimately, Being. On the other hand, the second vision gives us an idea of its differences with the spirit and, ultimately, brings us closer to the aspect of non-being that things possess. The ascending physical consideration complements the descending cosmological vision.<sup>241</sup>

Science has had the intuition of the poverty of the corporeal substance. Philosophy must let itself be taught this lesson. In the process of carrying out the ontological degradation, in the descent from the concept of person (spiritual substance) to that of thing (material

<sup>240</sup> "Everything that moves, is moved by something else."

<sup>241</sup> Strictly speaking, cosmology, as a science of corporeal substance, has a very limited scope. On the one hand, it borders with metaphysics, and on the other, with physics. Its role lies in applying a few principles taken from metaphysics to physics.

substance), excessive spiritual prerogatives remained stuck to the latter. Thus, science teaches us a lesson in humility—which the religious and mystical vision had already reached by considering the material world as if it were not.

Science's sin has been parallel to the one committed by philosophy before it, with less knowledge of the basic facts. While philosophy anthropomorphizes matter, science materializes Man. That is why it is necessary to listen to and to respect science in its field, but without allowing it to extrapolate.

In this sense, science teaches us an enormously fruitful lesson. Current scientists do not concede excessive importance to the individuality of material things, and they would probably not mind actually denying it. Strictly speaking, what is truly concrete is the person, the spiritual substance.<sup>242</sup> This could, perhaps, explain the Scholastic discussions on the principle of individuation of material beings. Ultimately, the individuation of the material substance must come from outside, from one of its accidents. This means that material substance, as such, is a mere support of its accidents—that is, that science is pretty much correct.

Strictly speaking, the body is not "entitatively" individual. The material cosmos is a unity, and the concept of corporal individual is relative. An individual who can be divided, afterward resulting in two individuals with the same nature, is not properly an individual. And by the time we reach the elemental corpuscle, physics has diluted everything into quantity. The material individual is unknowable because it does not exist, science would drastically say. All of these are the problems that modern science has unlocked, and which we merely wished to mention.

This is also why the kingdom of the spirit remains on the sidelines and has become independent of all scientific progress on matter. This imbalance is characteristic of our culture. This is also the reason why the point of intersection of both worlds, that is, Man, constitutes the problem of our time. But we have imposed here on ourselves the prohibition of speaking about human nature.

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This great diversity of meanings should not appear strange after the brief historical examination we have offered. There are some perennial problems in philosophy, which, according to each system's presuppositions, are approached one way or another. And in the same way that the problems are identical, the words are also many times the same—though they may take different meanings. This makes the problem more complicated, but at the same time it proves that we are facing an issue that cannot be avoided by anyone who, one way or another, is concerned with the *nature* of things. The objective of the following chapter is to study systematically the diverse constitutive aspects of this concept, trying to make their internal relationships visible.

<sup>242</sup> See the well-known definition of person as *rationalis naturae individua substantia* (Boethius, *De Duab. Nat.*).

## 4

## SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS: THE ESSENTIAL TRAITS

Along with the data the senses provide Man about reality, other elements nourish his intellect and help him reach a better understanding. The mind then creates those objective concepts that are indispensable to comprehending things. One of those primary concepts—as can be seen by the historical summary we have just presented—is the notion of nature.

In this chapter we wish to focus on the *invariant* and necessary characteristics of this fundamental concept.

For this, we first establish that nature is a *principle*, since only as such can we attribute beings' natural actions and manifestations to it; we then attempt to show that it is a substantial principle, that is, *substance*, since only as such can it fulfill its mission of first principle of operations and also solve the aporias that the mind encounters in change. In the third place, after having discovered God as the ultimate cause of its operationality, so that nature may truly be a *substantial operational* principle, we point out its dimension of *intelligibility* that is necessary for the human mind—so that nature turns from a concept that is “*intelligible for us*” into a *universal in essendo*, that is, into the *second substance* in Aristotelian terminology.

And finally, in the following chapter, we reach the actual concept of (existential) *being* by seeing how nature is directly anchored in the single entity itself, insofar as this entity possesses a constitutive dynamicity (actuality). This will be the true conclusion of this entire investigation.

With all this, we will have systematically elaborated the essential traits of the concept of nature, without neglecting the authentic teaching that the history of philosophy has provided us in the successive accentuation of the diverse facets of this issue. History is precisely what has offered the fundamental idea we have employed to consider these attributes as essential, and not others. It is undoubtedly an external ordering criterion; but one simple consideration—after everything is said—will also convince us of its intrinsic quality. In truth, only a substantial principle that is, at the same time, active and dependent on God can explain to our minds the hidden nucleus of the operation of real things. This affirmation contains the essential traits we have pointed out.

### Nature as Principle

One initial contribution that elucidates the fundamental concept within the plurality of meanings we have recorded can be immediately deduced from what we have said in the preceding two chapters: *nature is indeed a principle*. This principle's characteristics are the object of the present chapter.

If the word “nature” is impregnated with philosophical content, the term “principle” does not lag far behind. In the first chapter of the fifth book of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle, after having proceeded phenomenologically in the description of the diverse principles, extracts

what these have in common, thus defining principle as "that first element from which a thing either *is*, or comes to be, or is known,"<sup>1</sup> a definition that St. Thomas synthesizes by saying that the principle is "that from which something proceeds."<sup>2</sup> In this sense, it is obvious that both nature and cause, as well as substance, would be principles.

According to a Scholastic nomenclature, we could now delimit principle as a genre with a specific and adequate difference, and we would thus obtain the precise definition of nature.

In sum, we would have: the principle may be of the thing (*principium rei*) or of knowledge (*principium cognitionis*). The first may be extrinsic or intrinsic, whether it comes from outside or from the being itself. And the latter of these may in turn be considered as an intrinsic constitutive metaphysical principle of all created entity (potency and act) or as a physical principle, either of being—that is, principle of composition (matter and form)—or of becoming, that is, principle of generation (matter, form, and privation).

Physical principles would thus, by definition, be nature, since they would be the constitutive principles of φύσις. And in the Aristotelian doctrine these are the ones we have mentioned—especially matter and form, since the deprivation or lack of form in the subject that is capable of receiving it is a purely negative and accidental principle.

These are the principles that would have to explain change in things to us; all forms of motion would have to derive from them, since the fundamental postulate of the *Physics*, and which in itself constitutes the first problem that must be solved, is that of motion. Physics is nothing but the science of the mobile being.<sup>3</sup> Thence, consequently, *the definition of φύσις is none other than that of principle of motion and rest as such.*<sup>4</sup> And that matter and form constitute the principles of motion and rest—that is, nature—is simply the greatest thesis of Aristotle's *Physics*.

According to everything we have said, we can now define nature as the first intrinsic principle of motion, a definition in which this first intrinsic principle ultimately coincides with the essence of a being.<sup>5</sup> And this is the bridge that the notion of nature crosses in order to transcend the field of mere physics and penetrate into that of metaphysics with the largest generality. We must therefore extend the given definition by turning it metaphysical: *first intrinsic principle of operations*.

Consequently, even when everything we have said up to now still holds, it is not enough, as it is necessary to find the concept's metaphysical charge. In other words, it is necessary to discover the real latent problem that the concept of nature has wanted to solve, and to attempt the justification of this concept by virtue of the need that our mind has of it, as we need it to explain to ourselves, in the first place, the problem that the mere presence of external things presents, and in the second place, the metaphysical constitution of being.

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After everything we have said in the previous two chapters, it has been fully established that nature possesses the characteristic of being a principle. It is a principle because it has reason of priority, and we later see that this priority is not only in the order of being, but

<sup>1</sup> *Met.* V.1 (1031a17).

<sup>2</sup> "Hoc nomen principium, nihil aliud significant quam id a quo aliquid procedit" (*Sum. theol.*, I, q.33, a.1, c.).

<sup>3</sup> "Et quia omne quod habet materiam mobile est, consequens est quod ens mobile sit subiectum naturalis philosophiae" [Since anything having matter (in it) is mobile, as a consequence, mobile being is the subject of natural philosophy] (*Thomas*, *In I Phys.*, lect. 1).

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* II.1 (192b20).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 1.

also in that of knowing—although this has been overvalued by idealism. But in any case, it has always been admitted that being a principle is one of nature's essential characteristics.<sup>6</sup>

However, it must be said that, strictly speaking, priority is properly that which has reason of principle and not vice versa, as this proposition is obvious, while its opposite is not. In fact, if something comes before something else, the former has reason of principle with regard to the latter—while being principle is not enough to have priority, that is, to be previous to the "principled" thing.

Even if the word "principle" derives from *primum*, priority (in time), it does not mean priority properly speaking, but rather origin,<sup>7</sup> as is clearly shown in the Trinitarian problem in which there is no priority of any sort, despite the fact that being Principle corresponds to the person of the Father.<sup>8</sup>

Thus a new connection with the primary etymological meaning appears. Nature is principle because it is *origin* or, better yet, because it originates the activity of beings. With this, once again, we reach the pre-Socratic point of departure that inquired after the *beginning* of all things, that was given the name of "nature."

This beginning is evidently an intrinsic principle—as we emphasize later—since only an internal principle can be responsible, so to speak, for a being's activity. Hence we are not speaking of one single force in all beings, as in pantheism. We look for the first principle of the operations of a being insofar as they belong to *it*, not insofar as God intervenes in every act.

It is also understandable that the principle of something comprises that which is specifically its own, that is, its nature. Thus, the first principles of knowledge are those that characterize and specify the nature of our intellect in such a way that our intellectual nature would be another if these so-called first principles varied.

Needless to say, we are not here interested in a detailed analysis of what the principle is or has been for philosophy. We have said enough for our own purposes. An analysis of the multiple meanings of this word, however, would show that, despite its heterogeneity and the radical confusion it usually instigates, more or less patently, between origin and foundation, they always share a basic quality: that of possessing certain substantiality. The origin, the beginning, the cause, the birth, the source, the generation, the root, and so on are always principles because they are the *base* or foundation of something, namely, of something consistent on which action rests. This leads us to consider, for a moment, the issue of nature as substance, object of the following section.

### Nature as Substance

Pre-Socratics were concerned, as we have said, in finding a rational explanation for change. Variation implies a moment of "irrationality," which the Greeks cannot admit. In the discussion on the aporia of generation as of being and non-being, which divides all of the pre-Socratic schools, Aristotle ends with the words "*υποκεισθαι γαρ τι δεῖ?*"<sup>9</sup> there is a need for something as a *substratum/subject*. Nature as subject is the fundamental characteristic of nature in pre-Socratic philosophers; it is the characteristic attribute of the *αρχή* they were

<sup>6</sup> Kant defines nature formally as *das Erste innere Prinzip alles dessen, was zum Dasein eines Dinges gehört* [the first intrinsic principle of all that belongs to the *being-there* (*Dasein*, concrete existence) of a thing], *Met. Anf. d. Naturwiss.*, Introduction, 3.

<sup>7</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.33, a.1, ad 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.36, a.3, ad 3.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* I.8 (191a31).

looking for. Furthermore, nature is always fulfilled in a substance.<sup>10</sup> This is why, at the beginning of Western philosophy, *ἀρχή* is understood as something corporeal, and later it becomes the material subject of all generation, and after that, of all change. It will be called *φύσις*.

The search for something that is immobile and underlying in all beings will lead Plato and Aristotle to consider this as that which is rigorously characteristic and corresponds to each being: *its essence*. It is either immutable, transcendent (Plato), or immanent to things (Aristotle), and it defines what the thing really *is*. Change is a variation of *εἶδος*. Nature is the constitutive principle of each being, its essence, and its variations give way to generation and destruction. Thus, here, the problem of nature means the problem of the *essence* of things—essence that implies a dynamic meaning, since it is there mainly to explain change. Without ceasing to be the passive subject of motion, nature is also its essential active principle. The concept flourishes. Nature is neither more nor less than what the thing is, insofar as principle of its own dynamicity; it is the essence insofar as it is active.

But even if nature is taken as a synonym of essence, they are only identified when it is about the essence of a substance, since only the latter can be principle of activity. Properly speaking, if we say that nature is the essence of a (first) substance, we have already stated that it is a secondary substance—but here we are only interested in showing its dimension of genuine substantiality.

The identification of nature and substance is already present in Aristotle. One of the twelve meanings that modern exegetes have found of Aristotelian *οὐσία* is that of *φύσις*. And Aristotle certainly adduces the same examples for both cases. Beings *by nature* are animals and their parts, plants, and simple bodies, such as earth, fire, water, air;<sup>11</sup> and *substance* comprises the bodies, such as animals and plants and their parts, the elements and their parts and what is composed from them, such as the physical universe and the stars.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, Burnet<sup>13</sup> believes that the primary meaning of Aristotelian *φύσις* is that of "primitive substance," in accordance with the most genuine pre-Socratic and Platonic tradition; this conception has traditionally been considered Scholastic both in philosophy as well as in theology. And, strictly speaking, all substance is either the very nature of the thing or part of that nature.

It is held, thus, that only substances possess nature. At most, accidents will be able to be *κατὰ φύσιν* (*secundum naturam*), but not properly nature, analogously to the case of essence that, *per se*, also only concerns substance.<sup>14</sup> Accidents possess essence only by analogy; substance is pure essence. Only in substance do accidents find their way to the real world, and only through substance can the different, real categories be applied to them.

The consistency and solidity that we attributed to nature in the preceding two chapters are guaranteed by this, its substantial character.

Ultimately, we are playing with the same reality seen from multiple facets. This partial vision is the only procedure the human mind possesses to grasp spiritual things, as it is found in the last rung of perfection in the scale of intellects. Theology, for its own purposes, will underscore with greater meticulousness nature's substantiality quality as *substantial essence*, since the profound intimacy between nature and substance constitutes a firm Trinitarian and Christological base.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (192b34).

<sup>11</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (192b8–11).

<sup>12</sup> *Met.* VII.2 (1028b8–13)

<sup>13</sup> See above.

<sup>14</sup> *Met.* VII.4 (1030a30).

<sup>15</sup> The relationship between *φύσις* and the concepts of *οὐσιωσίς*, *ὑπόστασις*, *προσώπον*, etc., belongs here.

However, even within exclusively philosophical limits, we must say something more about the substantiality of nature. In order to avoid any interference with theology, we may for a moment turn exclusively to the Aristotelian data.

For Aristotle, nature is the *efficient cause* of natural phenomena—and this is only possible because of its intimate connection to substance, since, properly speaking, only real substance possesses efficient causality, as Aristotle himself admits.<sup>16</sup> Yet nature participates of this efficiency, as can be inferred from the numerous Aristotelian aphorisms in which it is attributed this particular quality,<sup>17</sup> and even more clearly in its parallelism to *τεχνη*,<sup>18</sup> where its efficient causality appears evidently.<sup>19</sup> Art is called moving cause<sup>20</sup> and its activity is "poietic" ("making"),<sup>21</sup> a characteristic that also distinguishes the efficient cause.<sup>22</sup> Strictly speaking, both nature and art are "forms" by virtue of which the subject that possesses them is endowed with efficient causality.

On the other hand, we may also understand the previously mentioned conclusion from the point of view of the problem that the notion of nature primarily attempts to solve: the problem of becoming claims an *efficient cause* since the *formal cause* cannot—as such—be conceived if not in the constituted being and, therefore, with no direct relationship to becoming. However, this consideration also leads us to include the *final cause* in the playing field, and the purpose certainly penetrates in nature's very constitution, as we see later on.

St. Thomas boldly states that all substance is nature,<sup>23</sup> although he inexactly attributes this saying to Aristotle, who literally says that "in another sense, the substance of all natural entities [of those which are by nature]<sup>24</sup> is also called nature." In fact, St. Thomas used William of Moerbeke's text, which correctly reproduced Aristotle's writing. The Philosopher, anyway, shares this point of view.

Historical considerations aside, it also seems obvious that, if nature must be able to justify the activity of beings (which is precisely the reason that the concept was introduced), it must be substance, or, more exactly, it must be substance insofar as principle of its own activity.

Since we are not dealing with the problem of substance here, what we have said is enough to elucidate its relationship to nature. *Substantia mea apud te est*, says the psalm,<sup>25</sup> and its meaning is clearly that of nature; but the issues that are implicit here have already been sufficiently discussed.

### Nature as the Rational Structure of Reality

It is obvious that nature, although real and objective in things, is also in an intrinsic relationship with our minds, since, ultimately, it is a concept created by our minds as of reality. It is not enough to say that it is a substance and a principle; rather we must realize that nature in fact carries within itself the intelligible, objective nucleus of things. It is not something that is merely found in things, but it is also in compliance with the human mind

<sup>16</sup> *Met.* VII.7 (1032a13ff.).

<sup>17</sup> See *Aphorism* no. 1 and many others, for example, no. 50.

<sup>18</sup> See *Aphorism* 34, etc.

<sup>19</sup> *Met.* IX.2 (1046b2); VII.8 (1033b7), etc.

<sup>20</sup> *Met.* XII.4 (1070b28).

<sup>21</sup> *Met.* VII.7 (1032a25).

<sup>22</sup> *Phys.* II.3 (194b29).

<sup>23</sup> *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 1.

<sup>24</sup> *Met.* V.4 (1014b35).

<sup>25</sup> Ps 38[39]:8 (*Vulgata*): "My substance is with You."

that has discovered it, and by doing so has, *in a certain way*, invented it. This aspect of the intelligibility of nature is what the post-Cartesian philosophical mind emphasized in a unilateral and exaggerated manner.

What is true in this conception of nature as rational structure of reality reaches to the point where Being maintains its primacy over Thinking. Herein lays the new aspect of this issue: the nature of things would simply be their *principle of rationality*; it would be the line of intersection between things and our thoughts about them; it would be all of the rationality that our intellect has to extract from things in order to understand them. The nature of beings will be that which they have that is rational.

With this we have achieved a new aspect of the problem, without it being necessary to interpret it from a Cartesian or an idealist point of view. Nature would thus be the crystallization of things in our minds—a crystallization that idealism considers a mere elaboration of our thinking mechanism, which by means of its functioning puts things into order, even creates them; and that realism interprets as the result of an action from the outside toward the inside, which is captured by our intellectual capacity without this necessarily excluding a certain dynamism of our minds. The truth is that in both cases nature carries the *intelligibility of a being*. This is where what will be later established as a fundamental postulate of all of the aphorisms about nature is founded: *natura agit rationaliter*.<sup>26</sup>

It must be noted that medieval philosophy considers nature as a rational structure of reality not only implicitly but also explicitly.

Furthermore, this characteristic will distinguish it from the Greek φύσις. If, on the one hand—according to what has been said—nature as creation of the Supreme Being can but *be*; on the other hand, as the effect of a Pure-Intellect God, as the fruit of a divine Idea, it must be completely intelligible—although not precisely *quoad nos*, but at least for its Creator, that is, objectively, *quoad se*. "Intelligent in act" and "intelligible in act" are exchangeable.<sup>27</sup> Thus, for a Metaphysics of Being, nature is full of mysteries, and it is—simultaneously—completely intelligible. It is full of mysteries for us; but thoroughly intelligible for its Creator.<sup>28</sup> Thus, when Man inquires after nature, he inquires after the vision God has of things and, failing that, after the maximum degree to which things can be intelligible for him. Here lies the foundation of Thomist rationalism and, at the same time, the limits of the Cartesian problem.

Nevertheless, it is true that, with Descartes, this *new mutation* in philosophical interest is consolidated: a problem that in medieval times was the mere consequence of a realist posture goes on to become, now, the central issue of philosophy. Now then, this new aspect of nature is contained in the classical Scholastic theory of "universals."

Nature is truly the *principle of intelligibility* of things. Each being's nature will be its intelligible aspect, and this is nothing more than the Thomist point of view of the problem. Hence the countless testimonies, which at first seem a bit surprising, by St. Thomas, Aristotle himself, and all of Scholastic philosophy, which identify the nature of things with the universal *in essendo*.<sup>29</sup>

The ancient Platonic aporia of *εν καὶ πολλα* (the One and the many) is presented in a living and real manner in the problem of nature. Already for the pre-Socratic philosophers, φύσις was *αρχή*, one of the things that the rest of things must participate in, to a greater or lesser

<sup>26</sup> "Nature works rationally."

<sup>27</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.27, a.1, ad 2.

<sup>28</sup> See my "Sugerencias para una Teofísica," *Convivium* 21 (1966): 235–43.

<sup>29</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, I, q.85, a.3, ad 1, as well as I-II, q.29, a.6.

degree. And later, nature continues to be either the *essentia velud* that guarantees the (natural) unity of a determined group of beings, or that which is characteristic and typical of each one of the entities in said group, the individuating principle of the *πολύ* (the manifold).

As to the merely logical concept of the universal as *unum versus alia*, that is, as that unity that is able to extend itself to a plurality, we are only interested in the so-called universal *in essendo*; namely, that which belongs to objective predication and which constitutes the essence of a being, abstracted from inferior-level differences. This universal is nature itself since it fulfills all of its requisites, and it may be considered in three aspects: *secundum se*, *prout est in singularibus*, and *prout est in intellectu*,<sup>30</sup> which respectively correspond to the classical solution to the problem of universals in *ante rem*, *in re*, and *post rem*.<sup>31</sup> The medieval dispute on universals was none other than a discussion about nature; and, reciprocally, the fundamental problems of current phenomenology and existential philosophy are intrinsically concatenated with these ancient controversies.

All of this allows for a new and precise interpretation of nature. From a realistic point of view, even if there is a complete distinction between a thing's *raison d'être* and Man's knowledge of the thing, there is also an intimate and fertile nexus between them, and the objectivity of knowledge emerges from this nexus. On the one hand, things are only knowable by Man's intellect insofar as they possess a certain intelligible nature that allows for the objective correlation that real knowledge requires. On the other hand, the human mind is able to reach the very being of things. What the former affirms about the latter will necessarily be intelligible; otherwise the mind could predicate nothing about things.

So nature is this very essence that is considered first in every thing. But things are individual, and many of them are also corporeal, which is why what we know of them is their essence, that is, their universal, which is what they have that is intelligible for us and, thus, also necessary, so that there may be real knowledge of them. A condition that pre-Socratics already made has been preserved and transferred to the order of knowledge, that is, that nature, as principle of things, must be something immutable and which remains. The real nature of things cannot lie in their variable and contingent, sensible, individuality, which we cannot intellectually assimilate.

We must point out here that it is easy to misinterpret the recognized formula that "there is only science (or knowledge for our case) of the general." What it states, in fact, is the following proposition, obvious in itself once realist principles have been adopted: *there is only intellectual knowledge of the intelligible*, since only the latter allows, by definition, for *intus-legere* (reading inside). Now, what is intelligible *quoad nos* is the universal; thus, we can affirm that there is no science if not of the universal, as "the universal" in the Aristotelian and Thomist sense means "the intelligible." The intellect does not understand if it is not through participation of the intelligible. Consequently, a material being must be universalized in order to be intelligible, while an intellectual nature can be such without having to abandon its individuality.

In this way we can solve many aporias about the science of the individual. In one word, the immaterial is not, because of this, universal, nor is individuality, as such, opposed to intelligibility. The only direct and positive relationship, *quoad nos*, is that of immateriality and intelligibility.

Now then, it seems as if, on the one hand, nature is the individual reality, as it is the essence of each thing; furthermore, we have seen its identification with substance, and, on

<sup>30</sup> "In itself, in each thing, in our intellect."

<sup>31</sup> "Before the thing, in the thing, after the thing."

the other hand we have just stated that it must be universal. So it may seem that either it cannot be substance, or it cannot be universal, as there is incompatibility between these, since the universal cannot be substance, as Aristotle repeatedly affirms.<sup>32</sup> However, this is not so, since substance is also universal.<sup>33</sup> The dilemma is solved in a concept by Aristotle himself that provides us with the most exact and complete solution to our problem, at the same time that it frees him from contradiction: *nature is the second substance*.<sup>34</sup> This is the conclusion.<sup>35</sup>

### Nature as Second Substance

All the characteristics that nature must possess are, in fact, unified in this meaning. In the first place, nature is a substance, as has been stated. Nature must be a principle that explains change in things, and only a substance can be principle. Furthermore, *being* is fundamentally said of the substance, and only in a certain way of accidents. Moreover, nature insofar as characterizing the essence of a thing must in a certain way give reason of its accidents—which primarily concerns substance.

However, the first substance cannot be principle of intelligibility, as nature requires.<sup>36</sup> The first substance is, by definition, individual, and fundamentally static, and the problem of nature comes to solve precisely the question put forth by the *being* and the *becoming* of the first substances. Therefore, there is nothing left but to examine whether the second substances fulfill this requisite.

Even if, from the point of view of the substance, we still have to see whether nature can be second substance, from that of universals, we understand that only nature can be that universal that concerns substance. In fact, Socrates—as Aristotle would say—is much more typified by being called a man or by being called rational than by being called thin, or dark-haired or fair-haired. Socrates, as a person, may truly belong to the thin people; but (and herein lies the profound difference) Socrates may cease to be thin, and not because of this cease to be who he is, namely, Socrates; but if he stops being rational, he stops being Socrates.

Without insisting once again on the problem of knowledge, we may easily see that the second substance represents the intelligible universal of the first substances, and that, in itself, it contains all that which makes a thing be what it is: its essence—without this meaning that, on the other hand, it is necessary to adopt the Platonic solution of *really* separating it from the first substance. What *really exists* are certainly things, that is, first substances, what is individual; but what *really is* (essence) for us is what is general, universal, intelligible (since to our mind the material individual is impenetrable). This antimony has been solved, according to Aristotle—and as it would be specified in medieval realism—by recognizing that the general is *real* only insofar as it exists in the individual (*universal in re*), and at the same time, the individual only *is* because it fulfills the universal.

The first substance is, thus, intelligible in its second substance.<sup>37</sup> Insofar as the latter is a universal, it can either be considered in the intellect, and it then possesses a universal "intentionality"; or in the singular, and then it is properly the nature of the thing, meaning

<sup>32</sup> E.g., in *Met.* VIII.1 (1042a21); VIII.1 (1041a3).

<sup>33</sup> *Met.* VII.3 (1028b33).

<sup>34</sup> And this we can gather, for example, from the dense fourth chapter of *De Ente et Essentia* by St. Thomas.

<sup>35</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Quodl.*, VIII, a.1.

<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, *Cat.* V (2a11).

<sup>37</sup> I do not wish to omit, even if it is in the form of a footnote and as an apology, Scotus's profound conception, which in a certain way fulfills the requirements of our problem even more rigorously.

the absolute essence of the genre, as genres and species are contained in the second substance and both define the nature (and essence) of a being—although mainly species, as it is “more substance” than genre.<sup>38</sup>

The classical solution posing a different existence of universals *ante rem, in re, and post rem* can be perfectly applied to genres and species considered as second substances. It is obvious that, if genres and species are only distinguished virtually from first substances, *in things* they really identify with the singular. *Before* the thing, they are only, undistinguished, in the (divine) mind that has conceived them. And *after* the thing, they are in our intellect according to their degree of abstraction.

There is one quality that does not, at first, appear clearly in nature as second substance: its dynamism, that is, the dimension of nature as *principle of operations*. But this difficulty is solved if we bear in mind that the first and second substances (that great Aristotelian distinction that even its actual author greatly ignored) are only distinguished *ratione*,<sup>39</sup> though with a ground in *re*, since nothing in the second substance is not contained in the first.<sup>40</sup> Then it appears that, even if the action of being qua being emerges from its individuality, insofar as this operation belongs to its nature, it must be understood as proceeding from its second substance. What really acts is the prime substance, but this operation is intelligible to us insofar as it is considered in connection to its second substance. Nature is, thus, the real principle of a *quod-operation* insofar as first substance, and intelligible principle of a *quo-operation* insofar as second substance.<sup>41</sup>

Adopting this solution (which, incidentally, has already been repeatedly formulated<sup>42</sup>), we can clarify the problem of the knowledge of nature, which, in the opposite case, seems to be without any possible solution. Peter's nature is not John's nature. To affirm this identity would be to defend Platonism. However, the concept (*ut sic*) must be univocal or analogous, as on the other hand we would fall into nominalism, since, if concepts were merely equivocal, Peter's nature would be completely different from John's and we would not be able to speak of a human nature that is common to both. The thesis we have defended here elucidates this difficulty, as it makes a concept, one by nature (second substance) and analogous, possible insofar as it relates Peter and John (second substance of two given first substances). John is to his nature what Peter is to his own. Nature is the real *subjectum praedicationis*, which, as subject, needs to be a substance,<sup>43</sup> and as subject of essential predication needs to be a universal, that is, second substance.

The gnoseological point of view makes us easily forget the metaphysical vision. What we have said is enough for a human conception of nature, that is, for the concept of nature created by a finite intellect that does not determine and create reality, but rather is measured by it.

In our concept of nature there is, thus, one ingredient that is objective and another that is the fruit of human intellect. It is not that our knowledge creates reality by knowing it, but rather that it, as an imperfect and inadequate knowledge, knows the Real by way of the peculiar mode of being of our finite intellect. Nature is, in this sense, the point of convergence, the geometric center of reality and of our ideas about reality.

<sup>38</sup> See Aristotle, *Categ.* V (2b7).

<sup>39</sup> See Suárez, *Disp. Met.* XXXIII, sect. 2, n. 14.

<sup>40</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *De Pot.*, IX.2, ad 6.

<sup>41</sup> This view of nature as second substance shows its enormous fecundity both in the theology of nature as well as in the question of the essence of the supernatural.

<sup>42</sup> See, e.g., A. Dempf, *Christliche Philosophie* (Bonn, 1938); F. Erdin, *Das Wort Hypostasis* (Freiburg, 1939); R. Jolivet, *La notion de substance* (Paris, 1929).

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle, *Cat.* V (3a7).

## 5

## SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS: THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT

### The Function of Nature

The first essential attribute of the concept of nature is that of principle and, more specifically, of principle of operations or of activity. But this quality does not consist in being principle without being a determined and specific principle. On the other hand, we have associated the dynamic quality of nature with the diverse attributes we have found—although perhaps it appeared with less intensity precisely in the last one, since the "second substance," as such, is not active.

This provokes a polarity in the concept of nature that it is appropriate to examine in further detail, as it constitutes the eternal philosophical problem of the immobility or dynamism of the entity, which, as we stated earlier, crystallizes in the concept of nature.

On the one hand, nature is the principle of motion and of change in every being (this is the reason why the concept was created), the maximum exponent of dynamism; but on the other hand, it is the "immobile mover" inside each being, it is the immutable that causes mutation. Thus, it is necessary to solve this tension, which lies in the very entrails of being and which has occupied all philosophical minds from Ionic times until today. And perhaps since Aristotelian times, there has been no other historical period in which this problem has been considered with as much interest as in contemporary philosophy.

We have seen how the Greek hoped to explain change through "nature," and we have also tracked the qualities that nature must possess in order to explain this change; but we have not yet seen *how* it explains it. We have affirmed that nature must possess such and such characteristics in order to justify the variation of beings in the universe, but we still have not seen how these attributes and this nature really provide an explanation of cosmic events. Because this explanation must be universal, it can only come from the concept of *being* itself, or, more specifically, from the true *nature of the entity*.

We must explain change, and for this there are only three types of general solutions: (a) either being is change, what is real is what flows, nature is pure motion; or (b) being is static, immutable, eternal, and motion is a phenomenon, it is appearance; or (c) there is an intermediate solution that considers motion as a kind of peculiar dimension of being itself: the actuality of potentiality. But let us not get ahead of ourselves. And this is the problem solved by Aristotle's philosophical genius—if not in a conclusive manner, definitely with an unsurpassed dose of truth. The time has come now to contemplate the historical panorama we have outlined.

However, this is not the place for elaborating Aristotle's entire physics and metaphysics, but rather only for trying to understand the reason for their "invention" (in the

etymological sense), which dissolves the aporias of his predecessors and establishes the premises to be a fruitful *theory of nature*, better yet, *of being*, since Greece followed the path "from nature to being."<sup>1</sup> And the invention that shows how nature unfolds becoming and, therefore, turns into the most important foundation of Aristotle's entire philosophy is his theory of act and potency.

### Aristotelian Systematics on Act and Potency

Aristotle's theory of act and potency appears precisely to explain the problem of becoming, in such a way that it allows a plenary vision of what the φύσις of things is.<sup>2</sup> In fact, this theory's historical predecessors are found in the pre-Socratic philosophers, with whom Aristotle engages in order to prove that there is no other solution but his own.<sup>3</sup> From a purely systematic point of view, Aristotelian thought could be summarized as follows:

1. There is motion. It is posited as a principle that natural beings, either in their totality or in part, are moved; and this is obvious by experience, by induction.<sup>4</sup> This is the fundamental postulate of the *Physics*, and this is why views that defend the immobility and monism of being do not belong to this science.<sup>5</sup>
2. Now then, before asking about the constitutive φύσις of this change and before considering the pure non-being, where variation appears to come from, Aristotle faces becoming itself insofar as something *can* become that which it was not. And this possibility, as something very different from a mere abstract non-incompatibility, as something very concrete, conditioned by what has become, will be called *potency* (δύναμις) and it will constitute an intermediate between being and non-being that will solve Parmenides's aporia. This special class of being is precisely the Philosopher's original discovery, as his concept of act basically represents the same concept of permanence and stability developed before him in Parmenides's *being* and in Plato's *idea*.
3. The possibility is fulfilled by something that has brought about its perfection—something, distinct from potency,<sup>6</sup> that has fulfilled it, accomplished it: this is the act. Hence, the latter is what is primary,<sup>7</sup> and potency can only be defined by act. The latter, in turn, is a very simple notion and cannot be defined,<sup>8</sup> and we must limit ourselves to saying that it is the thing when it is not in potency.<sup>9</sup> These are two primary intuitions.

<sup>1</sup> Zubiri, op. cit., 419.

<sup>2</sup> See *Phys.* I.8 (191b27) where he alludes to this theory—mainly explained elsewhere—as the final point of the first eight chapters of the first book of his *Physics*, dedicated to the discussion of previous philosophers.

<sup>3</sup> See also *Met.* I.3–10 (983a24, 993a27).

<sup>4</sup> *Phys.* I.2 (185a12).

<sup>5</sup> *Phys.* I.2 (184b26).

<sup>6</sup> *Met.* IX.3 (1047a18).

<sup>7</sup> *Met.* IX.8 (1049b11).

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In IX Met.*, lect. 5, no. 1826.

<sup>9</sup> *Met.* IX.6 (1048a31).

### The Aristotelian Posture

The real process to achieve this result was not so simple.<sup>10</sup> The antinomy between Parmenides and Heraclitus was there, alive and pressing, like the perennial conflict between Being and Becoming. Both thinkers agree on the foundation that constitutes their antagonism: the irreducibility of these two fundamental dimensions of the universe. They both accept the principle of noncontradiction, but while for Parmenides it is the ontic foundation of reality, for Heraclitus it constitutes a mere form of our thinking, since, strictly speaking, there is no such contradiction as everything flows and is, thus, relative. Heraclitus first postulates the a-logic element of the world, which so many of his followers will later more or less explicitly uphold.

The Megarian School<sup>11</sup>—the only one Aristotle mentions as directly contrary to his concept of potency, and in which one perceives a coalition of Eleatics and Pythagoreans—affirms that a thing *can* only act when it really acts and, consequently, when something is not done it is because it *could not* be done. Aristotelian dialectics forces the Megarians to take refuge in the extreme sensualism of Protagoras. In the discussion, the real and concrete character of Aristotle's potency and the transcendence and complexity of his position are perfectly drawn.

On the one hand, Aristotle must convince a Parmenides who is committed to his axiom: *Being is or is not*, and there is no middle ground. And on the other hand, he must refute a common Megarian thinker who affirms that a thing either occurs or does not occur, without our being able to say anything more about it, since it makes no sense to affirm that it is capable or incapable of happening if, in fact, it does *not occur*.<sup>12</sup>

This position, irreducible to the Aristotelian one, is ultimately the one held by modern philosophy, which spans from Descartes to Hegel. Only the being-in-act exists; being is absolute and immutable, and motion is the being's purely superficial, phenomenal appearance. This is why, within the same line, Leibniz claimed that there was no other solution than Spinoza's substantial monism or his own monadic infinity. Ultimately, this is the latent monism of all of modern philosophy.

Contemporary philosophy's determination will consist precisely in trying to overcome this posture held by rationalist philosophy. The Bergsonian "élan," the philosophy of life, modernist and existential doctrines, and so on all represent attempts to break the univocal notion of being. But the Aristotelian theory emerged precisely to confront this metaphysical problem.

In the analysis of common samples of becoming (the construction of a building, a man who sits, a student who learns), Aristotle finds, by examining motion as carefully as possible, two moments united in continuity by change itself: the moment that comes immediately before motion, and the conclusion of motion itself. The master teaches, therefore he *can* teach and he *has taught*; the student learns, then he *can learn* and he *has learned*. Motion occurs between these two moments.

It is interesting to see the posture Aristotle adopts in the face of Parmenides, and to compare it to the posture Bergson asks for in any metaphysical thinker.<sup>13</sup> The Stagirite attempts, insofar as possible, to capture motion in itself, and he tries to place himself within

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle's main entries on potency and act are *Met.* IV.12 (definitions) and all of book VIII, chapters 1–5 on potency; 6–7 on act; 8ff. on their relationship.

<sup>11</sup> *Met.* IX.3 (1046b29,1047b2).

<sup>12</sup> *Phys.* I.8 (191b26). See the same problem in *vedānta* and *mādhyamika* philosophy in my "The 'Crisis' of *mādhyamika* and Indian Philosophy Today," *Philosophy East and West* 12, no. 3–4 (1966): 117–31.

<sup>13</sup> H. Bergson, "Introduction à la métaphysique," *Rev. de Met. et de Morale* 11 (1903): 1–36.

it through a "sort of intellectual sympathy"<sup>14</sup> (contrary to Parmenides, who starts from the static and only grasps the static) without abandoning the firm ground of the intellect and falling into any kind of irrationalism. This effort will lead Aristotle to a theory of being which to him explains the very mobility inherent to being. Specifically, he owes his discovery of δύναμις (his "brilliant intuition" of δύναμις—we should say—making an exception to his own principle of the unintelligibility of potency) to that *intellectual sympathy* developed in order to capture motion. This will originate a fruitful tension within Aristotelianism, but let us not get ahead of ourselves.

The master from the above example possesses *active power* because he has been able to teach. The student possesses *passive power* because he has been able to be taught. The former possesses the ability to act, the latter, that of receiving, of being acted upon. "Power" and "potentiality" are the two meanings of Aristotelian δύναμις.<sup>15</sup> But we must for a moment examine his concept of act in order to afterward study its relationship to potency.

### Ενεργεία καὶ εντελεχεία

Aristotle turns to two words to translate his concept of act: ενεργεία and εντελεχεία. The first means activity or actualization, in one word, the operative act.<sup>16</sup> The second, instead, points to the resulting perfection or actuality, the entitative act.<sup>17</sup> Ενεργεία is a type of immanent motion, which is what distinguishes it from κίνησις that is imparted from outside. As a matter of fact, however, Aristotle sometimes uses both words as synonyms, although without completely losing the distinctive nuance we mentioned. Thus, he calls God ενεργεία<sup>18</sup> insofar as first mover of the universe, and εντελεχεία<sup>19</sup> when describing His perfection and immortality.

Without going into the discussion on the genesis of these two terms, the truth is that both senses are different, and that they are already expressed by their very own immediate meanings; ενεργεία comes from ενεργής, ενεργειν, εν ἐργῷ (at work). And when the ἐργόν is the τέλος (end, aim), either τὸ εντελές εχεῖ (what has its own end in itself) emerges or τὸ εντελές ἔχων (what has perfection) does. It is convenient to retain both meanings.

It is important to point something else out: there is no passive power unless in front of an active power. In a certain way, the latter creates the former: thus their intimate relationship. If any obstacle impedes the actualization of the passive power, there will be no potential being, but rather simply non-being. Thus, the earth is not a living being in potentiality, but only once it has been converted into σπέρμα, and that, only after having been transformed into an egg. Or, more simply put, the earth is only the potential statue after having been converted into bronze. Not having had this specification of the potency in mind has originated false interpretations of the Aristotelian theory.<sup>20</sup> Potentially being is a sort of anticipation of

<sup>14</sup> Bergson, *art. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> *Met.* IX.1 (1045b35ff.).

<sup>16</sup> *Met.* IX.8 (1050a22).

<sup>17</sup> *Met.* IX.3 (1047b30).

<sup>18</sup> *Met.* XII.6–7.

<sup>19</sup> *Met.* XII.8 (1074a36).

<sup>20</sup> Thus, for example, in minimalist interpretations, as in many handbooks and general expositions of the Aristotelian theory in which this intense tension is missing, Aristotle's ontology is considered an eclectic solution between two opposite trends, with a tendency to staticism. There also are interpretations that are excessively partisan, like O. Hamelin's (in his translation and comment to the *Physique* [Paris, 1907]), in which, even recognizing that idealism was far from Aristotle's mind, there is, nevertheless,

being, a promise of being,<sup>21</sup> and it is necessary that this promise be effective and that both guarantors be there in order for it to happen; they must almost have begun to yield that which they promise.<sup>22</sup> If the being in potency is not directly possible, this is not potentially being, but rather simply non-being.

Nothingness is not in potency with regard to being; it is not potential being, but simply nothingness. Thomas Aquinas understood this very clearly when he challenged the reasons of those who found the Christian idea of creation contradictory.<sup>23</sup> This is why God's creative faculty must be infinite, because it makes being emerge from where there was not even the potentiality of being.<sup>24</sup>

We represent nothingness to ourselves in our imaginations as a potential lack of being, and this is false. Potentiality is not an *entelechy* (we can say both in the common meaning of the term as in its classical one); the *οὐ δύναται* is really a being, and very concrete, although indeterminate, since it does not exist unless it is linked to a form, to an act. By suppressing the act, the potentiality disappears, but not vice versa. Thus it is correct to say that if active power is nothing but the being-in-act that can be a cause, then passive power is the same being-in-act with a wound in its flank, an imperfection, an indetermination, a need to be filled.<sup>25</sup>

This is the point missed by those who have criticized the Aristotelian solution to the problem of becoming as if it were some sort of eclectic posture against the rigid ontological principle of noncontradiction in Parmenides: *ex nihilo nihil* (nothing comes out of nothing). According to those authors, potentiality is being or non-being, without any possible middle ground. If it is *being*, becoming cannot be explained, as it would imply a transit from being to being. If it is *non-being*, the problem at hand remains, and the Eleatic demand cannot be eluded.

But to be sure, *being can be said in many ways*, as Aristotle insistently repeats. And the way of being of the created entity is not as the Parmenidean intuition postulates, but rather it is a potential being. Potentiality is being, and becoming is not precisely an extrinsic process to a Parmenidean Being, but rather a constitutive characteristic of the real being existing in the created world. If we wish to explain becoming as something extrinsic to Being, and Being is conceived as Parmenides conceived it, obviously there is no possible becoming. Such is the case of God. Parmenides is right; but Aristotle disagrees with him in that real being is not the Eleatic ideal entity, but rather the being that becomes, the being that is full of potentiality. It is not that there is an intermediate stage between being and non-being, but rather that the created being is a potential being. In other words, Aristotle is closer to Heraclitus than to Parmenides.

### The Reality of Motion

At this time it would be fitting to accurately flesh out Aristotle's theory of act and potency with the well-known axioms that the Scholastics deduced from it, but we are going to assume all of this here and continue our examination in another direction.

We have already mentioned that Aristotle was interested in capturing the motion of the Real in itself, and that by means of his theory of act and potency he achieved the maximum

an attempt to show that the correct interpretation lies precisely in idealism.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* I.8 (191a23ff.).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Baudin, "L'acte et la puissance dans Aristote," *Revue Thomiste* (1899): 161 (Paris).

<sup>23</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, I, q.45, and especially, a.5, ad 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.46, a.1, ad 1.

<sup>25</sup> See Baudin, "L'acte et la puissance dans Aristote."

penetration in the substantial nucleus of the contingent and moving being of the created world. But this theory must be interpreted correctly. It will then yield its fecundity and help us understand the irrational pretension of many contemporary philosophical systems and reduce these to their just limits. This classical doctrine will no longer appear so distant from the contemporary questions that dictate that we must perform all sorts of false equilibriums in order to even mention it in any philosophical exposition that wishes to belong to the heritage of *philosophia perennis*.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, not only is there a static aspect to the doctrine of act and potency, but also a dynamic one. And this emerges not only from the consideration of the process in living beings, but also in the general process of motion. Aristotle emphatically states that the fulfillment of motion is *in* the mobile body<sup>27</sup> and not in the "mover," even if it is an act of the latter—there is, in fact, nothing absurd in that the act of a thing be in another thing. Teaching is an action of the master, but it is in the disciple (although not separated from the master), rather like the action of an instructor is in the instructed.<sup>28</sup> This is the dynamic concatenation of act and potency. Aristotle is clear: the education that is given and that which is received are not identical, in the same way that action and passion are not identical although they identify *in* and *with* the motion that contains them.<sup>29</sup> The road between Thebes and Athens is identical, qua road, as that between Athens and Thebes.<sup>30</sup> Aristotle looks directly to motion. His entire theory consists in his efforts to understand it in itself. And his originality lies in this.

Aristotle tries to grasp the Bergsonian *le se faisant*, not to substitute it by *tout fait*,<sup>31</sup> but rather to integrate it in it. The "intellectual auscultation"<sup>32</sup> to which Aristotle subjects change in order to feel the soul of motion palpitating in it (potency and act) makes him realize that all sublunar reality is impregnated with an entitative mobility that is different from the antisubstantial mobility of Heraclitus and his successors. The Aristotelian effort consists in proving—with his theory of act and potency—that it is absolutely not impossible to reconstruct the motion of the Real with the "firmness" of concepts.<sup>33</sup>

### The Peculiar Structure of the Mobile Being

This is how Aristotle poses the problem: since nature is the principle of motion, and our investigation (both Aristotle's and this one) is about nature, we cannot do without knowing what motion is; for if it were unknown, the meaning of nature would also be unknown: *ignoratio motu, ignoratur natura*.<sup>34</sup> These are his own words.<sup>35</sup> It is essential to speak of motion, if we wish to reach a precise concept of nature. But motion is unintelligible without the theory of act and potency. Thus the need for this lengthy detour.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Hans Meyer, *Das Wesen der Philosophie und die philosophischen Probleme* (Bonn, 1936).

<sup>27</sup> *Phys.* III.3 (202a13).

<sup>28</sup> *Phys.* III.3 (202b6).

<sup>29</sup> *Phys.* III.3 (202b19–21).

<sup>30</sup> *Phys.* III.3 (202b13).

<sup>31</sup> Bergson, *art. cit.*, Proposition VII.

<sup>32</sup> Bergson, *art. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Against Bergson's Proposition IV, *art. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In III Phys.* 1.

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* III.1 (200b12).

In the first place, it is necessary to consider motion;<sup>36</sup> not its division<sup>37</sup> or its elements,<sup>38</sup> but only its essence insofar as it expresses a reference to nature. We have already pointed out how intimate the relationship between motion and nature is. Nature is principle of motion, and there is no motion outside of things.<sup>39</sup> This affirmation is contrary to Plato<sup>40</sup> and immediately places the problem in the field of realism.

In examining the change, the Philosopher observes that the only existing things are either in act, or in potency and in act at the same time<sup>41</sup>—although in a partial manner, of course. The entire problem lies in grasping the becoming: the mover is in act, but it is in act only insofar as it moves the mobile thing; the mobile thing is in potency, but it is movable—this is the decisive point—insofar as it is under the action of the mover.<sup>42</sup> In the analysis he makes of becoming, Aristotle observes that there is a moment in which being *is* not yet, but rather it *is being*. This process is not instantaneous: full fulfillment comes about gradually, and little by little, the becoming takes place. For example, the body starts out black and becomes progressively whiter. And thus the *οὐ δύναμει* finds itself two times in potency: in face of its act, and in face of the becoming of that act. We cannot fragment nor distinguish any further.

This Aristotelian fragmentation is similar to infinitesimal calculus. It operates with increasingly smaller increments, but there comes a time when the leap to the limit takes place; if this works out, integration allows us to reestablish the continuity of the function that had been divided into finitely small increments for its calculation. But is it obvious that something escapes us here. The mathematician calls the infinitely small increment "differential" and represents it with a symbol even when it is not totally intelligible. Aristotle calls this unintelligible element "potential being" and he represents it with a name: "potency." By means of this new element, change becomes comprehensible, integration can be verified. The act/potency theory is just a hypothesis to explain movement, but it is a fruitful hypothesis, which *can* verify the integration. This is why it carries out the minute process of differential calculus beforehand. Let us take note that irrationalism—of whatever sort—neither integrates nor calculates, as it either says it is not possible or it is not necessary. It is the draftsman who graphically solves the integration, but the important thing was calculating it. Yet this is not the place to discuss whether we can reach the same exactitude, generality, certainty, and so on with a mere illustration (sentiment, life, etc.) as with calculus (reason).

Let us proceed further with our analysis. If, of the two potentialities we have mentioned of the potential being—that with regard to the act and that with regard to becoming (even if *in re* they are mixed up)—the latter is actualized (act of potency!), and we eliminate privation without having yet given it form,<sup>43</sup> we thus have a being in a superior state to that of *οὐ δύναμει*, but still inferior to that of *οὐ εύτελεγέια*, intermediate between the two, mobile between the two; it is the *οὐ κινησεῖ*, it is the very motion.

We have reached the limit of this analysis. This mediator between potency and act, this mixture—or, more exactly, dynamic combination (in the chemical sense) of both elements—is

<sup>36</sup> *Phys.* III.1 (200b25).

<sup>37</sup> *Met.* XI.11–12 (1067b1, 1067a17).

<sup>38</sup> *Phys.* V.1 (224b34), and in general, all of book V.

<sup>39</sup> *Phys.* III.1 (200b32).

<sup>40</sup> Plato, *Parmenides* 138B–162E.

<sup>41</sup> *Phys.* III.1 (200b26).

<sup>42</sup> Literally: "The mover is [the mover] of the mobile, and the mobile is [moved] by the mover" (*Phys.* III.1 [200b31]).

<sup>43</sup> *Phys.* III.1 (201a4).

motion. It is a passage (*a Pesach*, Easter) between two polarities; and, like in any change of place, one of the terms is the one that pushes or attracts, and the other is merely passive. In a rifle shot, in an athletic jump, the force resides in the *a quo* term; in a fall from height, in the *ad quem* term. There are two motions in being too: impulse and attraction. This is the ontological problem of "appetite."

We can now better understand, and value, the Aristotelian definition of motion as the act (therefore something very real) of the potential being (therefore very concrete) insofar as it is in potency.<sup>44</sup> Not everything is motion, nor does this definition fall into a pure mobility. Bronze is potentially a statue, but the act of "bronze as bronze" is not motion.<sup>45</sup>

### The Act of Motion

After this analysis, we need to go back again in order to see its consequences in the concept of nature. In the first place, motion is so universal and general that there are as many types of motion as species of beings;<sup>46</sup> that is, motion is a supracategorical entity, and there are certainly several categories to which it applies—substance, quality, quantity, and place<sup>47</sup>—so that these constitute the diverse classes of motion: generation, destruction, alteration, increase, diminution, and change of place.<sup>48</sup> But there is more: motion, by this same generality, can only be defined by ontological elements that are superior to the categories and present in all of them: by potency and act. This will have an important consequence, namely, the possibility to invert the terms.

In fact, looking for motion among beings, motion, as such, is not even found among the beings in act. Neither does the potential quantity necessarily move, nor that which is in act. This is why the ancients believed movement to be something indefinite (*αοριστον*).<sup>49</sup>

As a consequence, Aristotle concludes, the concept of motion is an ultimate concept, as it can neither be placed in privation, in potency, nor in pure act. Motion is a certain act, but incomplete, because the potential thing of which it is act is incomplete. This is why we are left only with the given definition.<sup>50</sup>

But clearly, the entire world moves—not only the material universe, but also the spiritual one; and Man can only grasp it in its motion. Strictly speaking, Man does not even grasp action, but rather motion, that is, action mixed with passion. That which understands is the possible (passive) intellect; that which feels is (passive) sensibility. Man actually knows his own substance not by virtue of his own being in act (*actus primus*) but rather by the motion of his acts (*actus secundus*), by the activity of his own powers. We are not conscious of actions, but rather only of passions.

Well, the principle of all this motion is nature. Where nature is the principle that actualizes potency as such, it is the very dynamism of being. In fact, in correct Aristotelian parlance, "In tantum aliquid agit, in quantum est in actu,"<sup>51</sup> that is, in order to extract the potential being as such from its state, an action is required. This action is motion and its principle is

<sup>44</sup> *Phys.* III.1 (201a10).

<sup>45</sup> *Phys.* III.1 (201a30).

<sup>46</sup> *Phys.* III.1 (201a8).

<sup>47</sup> *Phys.* III.1 (201a 3ff.).

<sup>48</sup> *Phys.* V.1 (224b35).

<sup>49</sup> *Phys.* III.2 (201b27).

<sup>50</sup> *Phys.* III.2 (201b32ff.).

<sup>51</sup> "Something acts [only] insofar as it is in act" (*Met.* IX.8 [1049b5ff.]).

nature—which, for the very same reason we have pointed out, must be “act.” And since every created being moves, we can say that nature is the act of being, the activity of being itself.

We already indicated that the dynamism of nature is previous to any specification in potency, and that it ultimately coincides with its essence. We now see that nature is acting, and that—as the principle of operations—it is the very activity of being.

This aspect can also be expressed by means of the etymological meaning of “nature” as generation. Generation is properly an action, and the observation of the vital phenomenon of generation in a living being provides us with an adequate paradigm for the elaboration of a dynamic concept of *being*.

### Definition of “Nature”

This conclusion demands a more exhaustive exegesis. We have seen that motion is a *nearly* transcendental (a post-predicament) since it applies to various categories.<sup>52</sup> All the more so will have act and potency to be considered transcendental, since they divide the super-categorical entity. Furthermore: constitution in act and potency is a quality of the finite entity, since only Infinite Being, God, is pure act with absolutely no degree of potentiality. And it is also a quality of the material entity, since its composition of matter and form is nothing short of a special case of the general theory of act and potency: matter is form *in potency* and form is matter *in act*, we could affirm, exaggerating things a bit. Strictly speaking, matter is the potency of form and form is the act of matter.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, essence and existence themselves behave like potency and act.

Then, from what we have said, it can be inferred that to be composed of potency and act is the indispensable condition for there to be motion. Thus, all created beings would be movable, that is, mutable, and only the Pure Act would be immutable. If the reason for mutability is potentiality, and the cause of immutability is act, the more a being is potency, the more movable, mutable, it will be, but reciprocally, the less mover, the less active.

Consequently, we may now properly define nature as *αρχή τῆς κινησεώς*, as the principle of motion, as it is the cause of the mutability of things, of movable things, that is, of those things that are composed of act and potency. It is the cause that actualizes the potential being; it is, therefore, an act. Now then, this act will characterize all movable things, that is, every created being, since a thing is known, it is characterized, and, in one word, it *is*, insofar as it is in act. This act, that is, nature, will be the authentic *being* of things. This is the important consequence that, formulated like this, will allow us to deduce the fundamental characteristics of the created being.

Needless to say, the historical Aristotle has very little to do with the ideas we are going to expose. His brilliant conception of act and potency did not prove to be metaphysically fruitful until it was fertilized with the idea of a God who is Creator. For the Stagirite, matter is still a potential chaos that must be “in-formed” by the Demiurge. This clouds the transparency of the created being, which is not (in a chemical sense) a mixture of both elements, but rather a combination.

<sup>52</sup> In one place (*Met.* VII.7 [1032a12]), Aristotle says that change or, more precisely, the being of things that become, refers to all categories (*ibid.*, 14), even if, strictly speaking, this is not exact, as can be deduced from the examples he himself gives, which only refer to four of them, as he repeatedly states: *Phys.* VIII.7 (261a27ff.), even explicitly excluding the rest: *Phys.* V.2 (225b10ff.).

<sup>53</sup> *Met.* VII (1037b8ff. and 1041b6ff.).

### Nature as Activity

The subtle Scholastic metaphysical sense is called the real entity *ens naturae*, as opposed to the ideal entity and to the one of reason.

Again, it is worth remembering the classical Aristotelian definition of nature. In it we see that nature is called principle not only of motion but also of rest (*tou ηρεμειν*), of that which lasts. It is as if rest did not require its own principle. After what we have said about the polarity and tension of being, it is easier to understand this Aristotelian affirmation. As a matter of fact, nature is the principle of activity of being, but the latter's activity is its own entity, insofar as the static and dynamic dimensions of being merge in this audacious vision of reality. In this sense, nature is principle of motion as it is of rest, since for Aristotle rest is purely the absence of motion (*ακίνησια*)<sup>54</sup>—not to be confused with full immobility (*στασις*), which is the destruction of motion.<sup>55</sup> Motion and rest alternate and combine with each other in beings that are not pure act. This is why nature is not only the principle of the former, but also of the latter, in order to be able to be the ultimate root of operations in beings that are full of potentiality.

The being of things is radically active because it is primordially act. Yet at this time, we can ask one more—the last—question: Where does the activity of being come from? We now understand that this question means, *Where does nature come from?* Earlier we showed the Christian answer: nature comes from Another, *ab alio*. The ultimate root of intelligibility and, especially, of action, of the dynamism of a being, comes from the only ontic and dynamic source *a se*, from God.

But we must not turn to God precipitously, as Malebranche did, eliminating the existence of created intermediaries and of the creature's distinctive actions; rather, we must examine the solidity of these created natures—ultimately, of the finite entity. And this is where we see the enormous explanatory potential of the Aristotelian hypothesis we have developed, especially due to medieval Scholastic tradition, and in particular because of St. Thomas Aquinas—though this does not mean that everything is historically Aristotelian, or that we should not even attempt to overcome the Thomist position. This is what we try to outline next.

Being is, in its very root, activity, operation. Activity received from God, ultimately, but accumulated (in the electrical sense, so to speak) in the substantiality of nature. Being is activity, and at the same time substance. And not substance insofar as potency, but rather precisely the opposite: *substance is the act*. This is a most daring Thomist synthesis.

We must bear in mind that the three Greek concepts of *ousia*, *δύναμις*, and *ενέργεια*, whose traditional Scholastic translations are *substantia*, *potentia*, and *actus*, are still translated by Scotus Eriugena as *essentia*, *virtus* or *potestas*, and *operatio*.<sup>56</sup> In this sense, we can clearly state that *being is operation*.

And nevertheless, nothing is here less meant than a pure dynamism that dissolves all the immobility and substantiality of the being into pure becoming, which on the other hand would be unintelligible. Pure becoming, mere flow, is impossible: it is always *something* that becomes, *something* that flows. Being is both static and dynamic, and it is constituted by the internal unity of both dimensions, in which we cannot affirm that one part is static and the other dynamic; rather both aspects constitute the unity of being, even if each one has its corresponding, specific function in the whole unity of being.

<sup>54</sup> *Phys.* III.2 (202a4).

<sup>55</sup> *Phys.* VIII.9 (265a27).

<sup>56</sup> *De Divisione Naturae* I.62.

Thus, being the foundation, the base on which action rests is a peculiarity of the static side; but ultimately the active principle of action is the very substance of being.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, even when it is not necessary for substance to act *in actu secundo* by itself, it is nevertheless necessary that the substance of a determined nature is always in act by means of one of its multiple powers.<sup>58</sup> Just as we can prove that, for example, the essence of the soul is not mistaken with its powers (because, if essence itself were its immediate principle of operations, it would always have to be in act),<sup>59</sup> in the same way we can invert the argument and say that the active substance, if it has to *be* at all, it will always have to perform some operation, at least an "in-formative" one by means of its powers.<sup>60</sup> Absolute inactivity is the death of being, and pure passivity is the prime matter, which does not exist nor can exist without being informed by some act.

All of this emerges from Aristotelian *ενέργεια* considered in its complexity of activity and actualization, which the Thomist synthesis was able to join together, elaborating in its own concept of act the two moments of actuality and activity we pointed out.<sup>61</sup> And proof of all this lies in the dynamism of being that Aquinas defends without, on the other hand, destroying the distinction between first and second act.

Nature is the end of God's action, we said earlier, but this end—thus nature—is not pure receptivity, but rather, as the effect of Pure Act, it is also act with a constitutive, although participated, actuality of its own.<sup>62</sup> So, what God creates is *being*.

Being is act, in its double dimension of actuality and activity, though the latter is not fulfilled directly by the operating substance itself, but rather through a second act, by means of the operative power of being—connatural to it, but truly different from it.

Thus, for example, the human soul by its very essence is an act,<sup>63</sup> but only God is pure act and, therefore, pure operation identified with His substance.<sup>64</sup> Only God is *His* operation and *His* action,<sup>65</sup> and of His action all other actuality participates.<sup>66</sup> Operation in the created, and consequently mutable, being is motion, and therefore the actualization of a power. Thus, in order for a created being to be able to operate, to move, it needs to possess some sort of power, namely, that its being (act) be distinguishable from its operation (actualization of a power) in itself. Created nature consists of a duality between the agent and the action, which lies between the former and the operated thing,<sup>67</sup> between its essence and its active power. The created being's action is complex because it emerges from an actual ground that is only active through a real, active power.<sup>68</sup> Nature as act consists of an initial act, the integrity of

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In VII Met.* lect. 8, no. 1459.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentes*, II.97.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.77, a.1.

<sup>60</sup> *Contra Gentes*, II.80. We must bear in mind that St. Thomas admits this principle, even though in II.80 he presents arguments he will refute in II.81.

<sup>61</sup> This simultaneously static and dynamic meaning of nature is expressed in the well-known saying by St. Thomas that *nature est quaedam inclinatio indita ei a primo movente* [is a certain inclination grounded there by the First Mover] (*In Met.*, XII, lect. 12 [2634]).

<sup>62</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.66, a.1.

<sup>63</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.77, a.1.

<sup>64</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.22, a.1.

<sup>65</sup> See *Contra Gentes*, II.9.

<sup>66</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.75, a.5, ad 1.

<sup>67</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.36, a.3.

<sup>68</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.77, a.1, ad 3.

a thing, and a second act, its operation.<sup>69</sup> This does not exclude that the ultimate root of nature possesses that by which it exists and that by which it acts;<sup>70</sup> nonetheless, because its being is a being *ab alio*, it cannot possess its own essence and operation in the most simple unity and by its own right; and even if it exists and acts *per se*, it cannot be and operate *a se*.

Therefore, all action by the created being is an imperfect action; that is, it is combined with potentiality.<sup>71</sup> And this is the final cause of why activity in the created being, besides being a *perfection*, is a *perfectioning*, as it actualizes something that was in potential. Thence that neither perfect liberality, nor total freedom, nor full abnegation can exist in Man, as it can in God. Man cannot fully give himself without at the same time receiving; thus, the more perfect his abnegation, the donation of himself to a superior principle or idea, the more perfect his own perfectioning.<sup>72</sup> The consequences of this conception for the problems of predestination, providence, and so on are obvious.

In created nature, essence is not existence.<sup>73</sup> This is the last redoubt of creaturality: it is its metaphysical constitutive.

This real distinction certainly implies an inherent imperfection in created nature, but in no way does it suppose a purely static conception of being. The *ens a se* is essentially and existentially dynamic; and there is nothing strange in that the participated being also possesses an essential dynamism, even if it does not enjoy an existential operating capacity of its own. Properly speaking, through the latter the creatures—because of their acts—acquire their perfection and tend toward their ultimate end. The substantial form (to put it in strict Aristotelian parlance) acquires its full development in action; it is perfected through the second act.

### The Dynamism of Being

The contempt sometimes shown toward important distinctions that are considered merely logical leads to the devaluation of fundamental ideas, such as the one of the dynamism of being, which is contained in the distinction between double perfection corresponding to each one of these two acts. The first consists in the perfection of substance itself, and it is in a certain way invariable, as it is constitutive of each being.<sup>74</sup> The second one is, precisely, the end of the operation.<sup>75</sup> The end of activity is nature in its perfection.

But one should not believe that there is any "break" between action and being. The operation is nothing more than the expansion of the internal law of being. Thus, for example, if Man must possess God as his ultimate end, it will be through an action, through an operation.<sup>76</sup>

"Action follows being," dictates a traditional axiom, and the mode of operation follows the mode of the being.<sup>77</sup> Being is constitutively destined to action, and the latter flows from being.<sup>78</sup> This is the Scholastic doctrine, although they have not always known how to maintain the dynamic balance without falling into one of the two opposite extremes. The Scholastic

<sup>69</sup> *Sum. theol.*, II, q.48, a.5.

<sup>70</sup> *De Potentia*, q.9, a.1, ad 3.

<sup>71</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.44, a.4.

<sup>72</sup> This does not prevent this perfectioning from being relative (for example, local motion) or even detrimental for the whole being (moral evil).

<sup>73</sup> *Contra Gentes*, II.52.

<sup>74</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.73, a.1.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.3, a.2.

<sup>77</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.89, a.1.

<sup>78</sup> Aristotle, *De Coelo* II.17; quoted in *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.3, a.2.

doctrine of "being's natural appetite" is nothing more than a manifestation of this intimate dynamism of all nature, previous to any consideration of active powers. This appetite is always in act, and it is deeply rooted in every nature. An appetite is always greater the more perfect nature is, as it will then be more fully act and there will therefore be a greater intimacy between its operativity and the principle of activity.<sup>79</sup> In God, this appetite is the appetition of Himself that finds its most magnificent explanation in the Trinitarian doctrine.

All beings tend toward their own fullness.<sup>80</sup> This inclination toward goodness is the natural appetite of all things.<sup>81</sup> Goodness is only intelligible as the desirability of being. The attraction that every being has toward what is good is its own nature.<sup>82</sup> Good cannot be understood either starting from the Eleatic Being or from the pure Bergsonian tension, nor from Heraclitean Becoming, but rather from the real being, which is this nature in tension like a condenser overcharged with electricity. From this point of view, we can also understand the difference between the dynamism of the created entity and that of the Infinite Being. Our appetition is a tension that finds itself in an unstable situation in the fallen Man, who tends toward his perfection; this is why our activity is strictly motion, the transit from potency to act, perfectioning. Democritus already recognized that the knowledge and appetition of the noble things only belonged to those to whom nature had given this power.<sup>83</sup>

This is why there is a radical difference in our activity, which is motion, and God's activity, which is being-in-act. The creature's dynamism is a titanic struggle for existence; it is a dynamic balance between being and *not-yet-being*; it is a current that constantly flows from being to *no-longer-being* through corruption, and from *not-yet-being* to existence through generation.<sup>84</sup>

The creature's action is not pure activity, but rather it is full of potentiality, and, therefore, when acting it receives, that is, it is perfected, and when it operates, it is actualized; in one word, it moves. Dynamism in God is pure activity, but without motion in the strict sense; He is immutable. His stability is perfect, and His appetition is circular, and He is dynamic out of a dynamism without δύναμις,<sup>85</sup> in an integrally active immobility. He is He who *is*, He who exists.<sup>86</sup> The created being is certainly in act, but it is an act whose subject is a power; it is an actuality that emerges from a potentiality. God's activity emerges from His own act; it is *one act*. The subject of His act is the act itself.<sup>87</sup>

Just as the static quality of being is predominantly manifested in transcendental *unity*, so does its dynamic dimension appear with more strength in *goodness*. And so, the dispute on values and their relationship to being has gained ground in modernity, which is more inclined to a dynamic than a static interpretation of being. The current priority of the *bonum* above the *verum* also finds its explanation here.

If being is dynamic, it will not be nonsensical to ground the values of modern ethics in the traditional transcendentals of being. Axiology is founded on metaphysics—not on a

<sup>79</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.35, a.6.

<sup>80</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.6, a.1.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q.8, a.2.

<sup>82</sup> (Pseudo)Dionys., *De Div. Nonn.* IV.7.

<sup>83</sup> Democritus, fragm. 56 (Diels).

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sermones festivi*, 61. It would be hard to imagine a more dynamic expression than the one used by St. Thomas, since he adopts the same formula as Heraclitus.

<sup>85</sup> In God there is power only insofar as it identifies with its act. See *Contra Gentes*, II.7–10.

<sup>86</sup> See Ex 3:14 and the whole theological tradition dealing with it.

<sup>87</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.54, a.1.

cold and hieratic ontology, but on the conception of an entity that is full of life and activity. Only if the entity is active will it be able to found the moral norm. But this is not the place to tackle this issue.

### The Metaphysical Synthesis

The nature of a thing is its end, Aristotle used to say;<sup>88</sup> and he did not understand this strictly from a social point of view, not even exclusively as end, but rather as *ending*, that is, as terminus of arrival and of rest of the dynamism of being itself, which we cannot say has fully achieved its nature until it has reached its goal.<sup>89</sup> *Logos*, *telos*, and *energeia* are indissolubly combined in the entity, says modern investigation following Aristotle.<sup>90</sup> Essentially, this is the great problem of the nature of being, where we have ended up after starting from less transcendental considerations; and here a series of perspectives has emerged that will have to be followed one day in order to delimit it, not only extrinsically but also from within—and then savor it—this last and recondite nucleus of things that we call the *nature of being*.

At this time we can already begin to surmise with greater clarity what we said in the preliminary chapter on the meaning of the problem of nature. The doctrine of act and potency that we have used to explain the last essential attribute of nature is the one that, at the same time, explains the character of created or contingent nature which concerns every being that is different from God. This theory is the one that allows the overcoming of pantheism—a latent characteristic of modern philosophy, as I said. In fact, modern philosophy stems from the conception that both in the external world as well as in that of consciousness there is only actuality without potentiality; and there is but a small step from there to pantheism; or rather, the path is already set, the only thing left to do is tread it consistently. If potentiality is not admitted, all beings will be absolute and immutable: they will be a more or less degraded part, but a real part, nonetheless, of the absolute and supreme Being. These general considerations are merely pointed out here.

After everything we have said, it will be clear that motion is not exclusively a peculiarity of the traditionally named "mobile entity," namely of the corporeal being, but rather that it is a general characteristic of the created being.

When Aristotle elaborates his concept of motion as of the motion of living beings and of inert bodies, he does not transcend cosmological limits. The Christian tradition has considered motion under its ontological aspect, even if it has not, until very recently, worked out the peculiar characteristics of the motion of the simultaneously *spiritual and material* being. This is the metaphysical problem of history that is being developed in our times. Not only bodies, but also people and spirits move—even though, from this general perspective, nothing can be said about the different motion of beings. It is obvious that the motion of a spirit is not univocal with that of a body. For this, we must descend from general ontology to special metaphysics. Because motion is different in every sphere of being, every one of the latter possesses its own duration: eviternity, temporality, time.<sup>91</sup> But we are not here interested in characterizing the diverse ways that beings have of actualizing themselves, of becoming, but rather in consigning the problem in its utmost generality.

<sup>88</sup> Aristotle, *Polit.* I.1.

<sup>89</sup> The medieval idea—of neo-Platonic influence—of the *regressus* (coming back) of all beings to their original Source has its Aristotelian point of insertion here.

<sup>90</sup> See Gaspar Nink, "Logos, Telos, Energeia," *Scholastik* 17 (1942): 28.

<sup>91</sup> See my *La dimensión histórica del hombre*. See also my article "La Misa como consecratio temporis. La tempiternidad," *Sanctum Sacrificium. Actas del V Congreso Eucarístico Nacional* (Zaragoza, 1961), 75–93.

The analysis of motion is not, thus, a simple physical problem and, even less, a simple theological one. If God is Being,<sup>92</sup> the rest of things either are also Being—which is impossible, as they are mutable<sup>93</sup>—or they find themselves being another way. This other way is in motion, that is, ultimately, going toward Being, "be-coming," walking toward God. God cannot move, as, if He moved, He would not be the full and absolute Being.

For this very reason, when we see that things move, we cannot identify them with God. With this, the problem of motion becomes the most important one in Christian philosophy. Manser even says that "scientifically, Christianity could only be found in the field of the doctrine of act and potency"<sup>94</sup> and the ultimate reason of this lies in that only by this can the mind rationally shoulder the revealed data. This is, according to Manser, the necessary structure for Christian philosophy.

Essentially, this mature development of Aristotelianism achieved by Thomas Aquinas represents the overcoming of the two extreme positions, which already appeared to the Stagirite before, whose doctrine is the first brilliant effort to dominate the aporia between Being and Becoming. In fact, the problem of being is the philosophical question par excellence, and for this problem there are ultimately three solutions—by making the different nuances go in the same directions: the Eleatic, the Heraclitean, and the Aristotelian, that is, the static philosophy of Being, the dynamic philosophy of Becoming, and the dynamic philosophy of Being (or static philosophy of Becoming, so as to complete the dialectical game and accentuate Aristotle's intermediate position).

And these solutions, stated in realistic terms in Greece, have again been repeated from an idealist viewpoint in modern philosophy from Descartes to Bergson. However, we must once again underline that the Thomist solution is not an eclectic effort to reconcile the unreconcilable—the static Being with Becoming—but rather the real synthesis of two partial aspects of reality that our mind grasps separately. That is why the formula of this synthesis may be termed the *dynamic philosophy of Being*, but not pure dynamism, rather the dynamism of *Being*. Synthesis is not found in some middle ground between being and becoming, but rather it is discovered in the entrails of being itself; its very dynamism, its motion, is *nature*. For this reason, in the idea of nature, the metaphysical synthesis of reality is condensed and crystallized. It is the marriage of static Being and unconscious Becoming; it is the *dynamic nucleus of Being*, it is the *soul of the entity*, if I am allowed this expression.

Metaphysical synthesis reaches the unitary concept of being. An excessively Aristotelian nuance of act and potency makes us sometimes assume a sort of duality within the actual being. It is not that within each being there is an active and a passive side, as if potency were independent of the Pure Act, but the entire being is one, and it finds itself relatively in act and in potency. Act and potency are not only two correlative concepts, they are also relative.

The entire created being is in potency with regard to God, and the act itself is nothing if not in relation to the potentiality that it actualizes. The created being in its totality is in potency; it is traveling toward the Act. Things are insofar as they return. A being is insofar as it is "be-coming," or more exactly, coming to Being.

<sup>92</sup> Ex 3:14.

<sup>93</sup> St. Augustine saw this quite clearly, although, as a faithful disciple of Plato, he did not admit the reality of the potential being: "Res enim quaelibet, prorsus qualicumque excellentia, si mutabilis est, non vere est: non enim es ibi verum esse, ubi est non esse" [Anything, excellent as it may be, if it is mutable, is not really: in fact, there is not true being where there also is non-being] (*In Ioban. Ev. tract.* XXXVIII.8.10).

<sup>94</sup> G. Manser, *Das Wesen des Thomismus* (Freiburg, 1935), 43.

In other words, the created being is constitutively mobile. Now then, this motion, which implies the potentiality of the entity, is a motion toward something, and it cannot consist in any other thing but a *being*. The being moves in order to be, and motion is nothing but a coming to being. The motion of things is being and takes them to being. Therefore, the whole being of everything is nowhere if not in their end. In this case, things *are-not-yet*. You cannot sever the dynamism of a being and consider it isolated from its end.

This is the enormous fertility of the potentiality of being. The anthropological consequences are tremendous.

What we have said up to now does not presuppose an absolute connection between Christian revelation and the ideas we have exposed, but rather only a relative and historical, although intrinsic, relationship.

It is possible, in fact, to begin with a concept of Being that is different from the Hellenic one and the Western one; the approach will evidently be different then. The Parmenidean aporia is not necessarily the first metaphysical aporia. There is—and this is only an example—a Hindu metaphysics that allows for a reformulation of the Christian dogma from other initial metaphysical postulates, which do not exclude Western ones, but neither do they coincide with them.<sup>95</sup>

What Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, or Bergson—to name some modern examples—may have glimpsed when they criticized the imperfection of Western metaphysics is what the ancient wisdom of *Upaniṣads* insinuates when it aspires to install itself in the Divine Being itself, and from there understand the reality of what *is-not-yet*.

Just as Western philosophy settles into the concept of Being, discovered by reason, and then elevates itself up to Divinity, an important part of *vedānta* theology, for example, begins from a divine reality reached vitally in order to later descend to the comprehension of the things of this world. One could say that this is not philosophy, but this does not mean that it is not wisdom over things, and an ultimate explanation of Reality. But we are merely pointing this out here....

### The Unity of Being

After this long analysis of the concept of nature, it is necessary to expose its primordial unity, making a synthesis of all that has been said. By penetrating into the concept of nature we have found in it a full generality that makes us mistake it *in re* with the concepts that also express *being* in general under a determined aspect. Nature, like essence, like substance, is thus an expression of the *same reality*: being in function of one of its essential dimensions, which appear as characteristic to our limited minds. Fundamentally, we have thus reached the *res* as *transcendental unity*—of which we call *essence* that through which something is primarily understood (*id quo primo aliquid intelligitur*); *substance* that which the thing is in itself (*id quod aliquid in se est*); and finally *nature* that by which the being acts (*id quo primo aliquid agit, prima radix operationum*), according to the traditional definition.

And on the other hand, in the order of existence, we can also reach the same synthesis in the transcendental unity of the real existing being. Existence and essence—it has been said—come together in nature. If nature is the end of God's action, and this action ends by

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<sup>95</sup> See my *Kultmysterium in Hinduismus und Christentum* (Freiburg, 1964); and *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London, 1964), chap. 3, where the so-called cosmological argument of the existence of God is studied from the twofold perspective of India and the West.

*giving existence,*<sup>96</sup> we can understand that nature is the real synthesis of the existing being.<sup>97</sup> "Existential substance" is that which has nature; and nature, in turn, is nothing but that by which substance has existence.<sup>98</sup> This is why, in God, existence can have three substantial supports (three Persons), whereas there can only *exist* one divine nature.<sup>99</sup>

We have seen that nature is activity, that it is the active principle in the activity of a being, and that in the created being this activity is motion. Every being qua being is active, and the created being, insofar as it is active, is mobile. Nature is the principle of motion. It is the principle of becoming, the active nucleus of a being, the bearer of ontic dynamism, the unifying center in harmonic synthesis of the static (Eleatic and rationalist) and dynamic (Heraclitean and Bergsonian) character of a being. All of this can still be expressed by means of the ancient Aristotelian formula. But motion is not a mere passion of being, rather it lies in its very constitution; more properly speaking, it is a "form of being,"<sup>100</sup> it is the form of the created being, it is the characteristic of creaturality. And with this, we may once again connect to the etymological meaning of the word. Nature is given from its origin, that is, from its creation, to finite beings. We have, once more, creaturality as the most proper characteristic of the nature of contingent beings.

These were the principles we absolutely needed to reach. Their consequences constitute an entire metaphysics.

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<sup>96</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia*, q.3, a.7; *Sum. theol.*, I, q.45, a.5.

<sup>97</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, III, q.17, a.2.

<sup>98</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, III, q.23, a.2.

<sup>99</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.8, a.1.

<sup>100</sup> Zubiri, op. cit., 416.

## SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS: PRIMARY MANIFESTATIONS

In detailing the fundamental concept of nature with the help of the historical gestation of the problems it entails, we have tried to delimit this concept by means of a few essential attributes. So, in general, we have associated this concept with the notions of principle, substance, God, intelligible, universal, second substance, and being.

Had we been examining the development of theological thought instead of the historical process of philosophy, other characteristics would have appeared as milestones for the delimitation of the concept of nature, such as the notions of subject, person, subsistence, relationship, and so on.

But there is still one more path to tread in order to complete the delimitation of the concept of nature in its full generality, namely, the study of its *primary manifestations*, or rather of its *constitutive elements*. Thus, for example, nature as such is not order, yet order is a fruit of nature; or, properly speaking, a certain ordering is essential to nature since, in always manifesting itself congruently to itself, it fulfills a determined form of action that will later, in general, be called "the order of things." We may therefore apply certain concepts to nature that enrich and specify its way of being—without descending to the peculiarities of determined natures.

In this sense, all nature manifests itself as a *perfection* of beings organized toward an *end* and coming from an *impulse*. This is why nature is characterized by its own manifestation insofar as point of departure (Love), insofar as point of arrival (End), and insofar as manifestation of a set of beings (Order).

We have reached the concept of nature starting from the activity of beings, in our search for their last principle. Now, observing this same activity, we find that it possesses a sense, that is, an *order*, which is determined by its *origin*, its *end*, and *magnitude*. It follows that, on top of the point of departure and the point of arrival, namely, of impulse and direction, we must consider magnitude, that is, *perfection*. In one word, nature manifests itself as a perfection, therefore possessing, in classical language, a mode, a species, and an order,<sup>1</sup> that is, measure, form, and end: a *form* by which it is in act, and which gives a species to it; a *measure*, insofar as it is a commensuration, previous to the form and prerequisite by it, with regard to its principles, that is, a mode; and an *end*, insofar as weight and inclination, consequent to the form, toward that which is convenient for this form, namely, an order.<sup>2</sup>

Why this precise classification and not another? We have not adopted it because it is a classical and, in a certain way, even biblical pattern, but rather because it characterizes the

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.5, a.5.

<sup>2</sup> See John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Theol.*, in I, q.5 (ed. Desclée, 1931, 1:514).

complete manifestation of a being. This was clearly the motive that drove tradition to consider this "Trinity." And understanding this last word in its strict theological sense is precisely what gives us the key to understand the classical trilogy of "mode, species, and order."

Indeed, even if the production of created natures is the effect of the nature of God and, therefore, common to the three Persons,<sup>3</sup> nevertheless, in a certain way, in all creatures we find a representation of the Trinity as an imprint<sup>4</sup> insofar as every substance is a "something," is formed by some species, and possesses a certain order.<sup>5</sup> This is what the biblical phrase "Omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere dispositi" apparently alludes to<sup>6</sup>—that is to say, St. Augustine's mode, species, and order.<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, in every creature there is a certain similarity to the trine God, which allows us to find the three divine Persons in it as its supreme models. Every creature, in fact, insofar as substance is cause and principle (*mensura*) and is similar to God the Father; insofar as it possesses some form and species (*numerus*) it represents the Word; and insofar as it possesses order (*pondus*) it represents the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> Christian symbolism begins here, but its problems and limits are not within the scope of this investigation.<sup>9</sup>

Thus by studying these elements in each being, we point to their most real and irreducible nucleus insofar as it represents a certain "imprint" of the three divine Persons. By themselves, each one of these themes would constitute the object of many works. We only study a few aspects of this extensive issue here, consciously setting aside many others.

In any case, we must bear in mind that what is under consideration here is the conception of nature itself, since, after all, we know nature through its manifestations, and the way we can begin to penetrate into its essence is through these primary exteriorizations. At the same time, this proves the priority of this focus with regard to those which inquire *in abstracto* after order, love, or end. These concepts are connected to that of nature, and strictly speaking, we can affirm that they are nothing but abstractions that stem from nature itself. Nature is that which is ordered and possesses an end, and so on. The debates that take place in the history of philosophy on finality, perfection, order, and so forth presuppose precisely a disparity in the concept of nature. It is clear, for example, that if this concept is interpreted from an idealist point of view, the problem of order (lying on a different level) will certainly lose a great deal of interest. It is also immediately obvious that an atheistic or even a deistic conception will resolve the concept of the end of nature in a completely different manner than would a theistic solution. Essentially, the divergence lies in the concept of nature, even if we have reached a different notion of it by virtue of disparate gnoseological and metaphysical premises.

But the case is that the last stronghold of the discrepancy among philosophical systems lies in their conception of nature. And in it, the rest of the concepts are embedded as abstractions taken from the real nature of things. Thus, the topics of goodness, perfection, evil, "appetite" (desire), and so on are in intimate concatenation to this problem. They are all peculiar metaphysics of nature since, as we have already shown, the problem of nature in its full generality, as a problem of the dynamism of being, is the basic point of all metaphysics.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VI.10.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.45, a.7.

<sup>5</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.45, a.6.

<sup>6</sup> "You have arranged all things arranged by measure, and number, and weight" (*Wis* 11:21).

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, *Lib. de Natura Boni*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentes*, IV.26.

<sup>9</sup> But let us not forget that "the divine nature, in its infiniteness, transcends every mode, species, and number [individuality] of creatures" (Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia*, q.9, a.9).

This is why current disputes about being and value, about value and order, about being and existing, and so on, belong to an overall vision of what the nature of things is. This is another reason for us to limit ourselves in this chapter to a few reflections of subsequent interest.

It may be useful to make a general observation before. This is not about making apologetics of any sort, nor about carrying out a gnoseological discussion, as it is also not about a labor of criticism against ancient and modern antiteleological arguments. We are not, after all, *in via ascensionis ad Deum*, in which only very few things may be assumed, but rather *in via descensionis*, in which we may show the enormous riches and profound connections that can be found in things. Sometimes, an excessive controversial preoccupation prevents the development of a complete vision of the world, since it only uses the few premises that the adversary allows. But beauty, wholeness, perfection also possess their strength of attraction and of conviction. And many times, it is more about convincing than about demonstrating. Nonetheless, this is not the place to expound and develop every potentiality of a theo-teleological worldview.

### Order

#### *Ordo Naturae*

There is a fundamental concept for philosophy, which, like nature, also has reason of principle: it is order. Wherever there is a principle along with a plurality of beings, it becomes the model for their relationship: order appears.<sup>10</sup> In fact, their relationship consists of an order<sup>11</sup>—and this distinguishes nature from order, since the latter is not a substance like the former, but rather a real relationship.<sup>12</sup>

The very simplicity of the concept of order makes its definition difficult. Despite this simplicity, we can distinguish a triple order, given that the relationship among a plurality of distinct beings<sup>13</sup> (which is a necessary condition for an order to exist<sup>14</sup>) may be of place, of dignity, or of origin.<sup>15</sup> That is, the reason of order includes in itself the reason of priority and posteriority (according to place and time), that of distinction, and that of origin.<sup>16</sup>

The first constitutes a purely intrinsic order; the second, instead, presupposes the very order that it signifies; and the third is properly order—with which we have a new relationship of order with nature in its primitive etymological meaning of origin. So, in the Trinity there is order by virtue of this simple reason of origin, without any sort of priority.<sup>17</sup> Precisely this order *secundum originem* (because of its origin) is the one tradition calls *ordo naturae*.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, order comes to nature from its origin—ultimately, from God. Nature is ordered because it comes from God.

The study of *natural order* is not what matters now, but simply the remark that all nature requires order insofar as it is the manifestation of a plurality of activities, and that this order essentially comes from an order *secundum originem*, a relation to God. This is how we attain

<sup>10</sup> *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.26, a.1.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Pot.*, q.7, a.11.

<sup>12</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.116, a.2, ad 3.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sententiarum*, dist.20, a.3, sol.1.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Pot.*, q.7, a.11.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, dist.20, a.3, sol.1.

<sup>16</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.26, a.1.

<sup>17</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.42, a.3.

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *Lib. contra Maxim.*, 4 (quoted by Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q.42, a.3).

the concept of universal order, and not only that of the particular order of each nature, given that the Origin, the foundation of the order of all natures, is the same.<sup>19</sup> The fruitful idea of creation as determining factor of the Christian vision of all things appears once again in another guise. Admitting that there is a God Creator results in a unitary origin of everything and, with this, a universal order that turns the totality of beings into a "cosmos."

But it is useful to insist a bit more on this, posing the question once again from the beginning, in order to overcome the mere formal concept of order and consider the *order of nature* we have mentioned.

### *The Natural Ordering to God*

Both concepts—order, nature—refer to being principles, and both also refer to action; that is, they have a strong dynamic quality. Operations that stem from the essence of the being itself are called *natural operations* if they are considered in themselves and in relation to their origin; but if they are considered with regard to the operations of other beings, that is, in connection to the rest of the world, they are called *ordered* because they affirm a relation to an order that is called, somewhat redundantly, *order of nature*. This sense has even been preserved in everyday language, which refers to something natural as "ordinary" and to what is not as "extra-ordinary."

Order and nature come together in the fundamental attribute—that we have already studied—of *second substance*, since this constitutes not only the essence of nature, but also the expression of the internal and hierarchized order of all things that, although unrelated among themselves insofar as individual substances, present a hierarchy insofar as second substances.

In the "ensemble" of the manifestations that arise from the nature of each being, a determined order reigns which, by definition, is called *natural order*. What is difficult and debatable—as we can blatantly see in the field of ethics—will be determining it materially, that is, filling its content. So, then, order would be nothing more than the combined manifestation of the different beings of the universe. *The order of things will be the exponent of their nature.*

The lapidary Aristotle says that "nature is the cause of all order."<sup>20</sup> And even if the meaning of the context does not allow us to generalize, this does not make it less true that the intrinsic order of every being, as well as the general "concert" of beings, comes from the strength placed by God in the very nature of each one.

What laws are to art and to any artificial product, order (intrinsic order) is to nature; and just as Man's free manifestations follow certain determined courses, the activities of beings show a certain order—an order that also includes the examples we have mentioned, since laws and Man's will also form part of an order: a natural order.

Order as the manifestation of the nature of beings perfectly expresses the dependence that the latter have toward God as author of nature and universal orderer. The totality of natures will thus become the order of nature, which, as such, will also depend on God, and in which we will be able to manifestly see that the natures of beings are nothing more than the instruments that God uses so that things tend toward their own end.

Therefore, parallel to the concept of nature, we can distinguish a twofold order, insofar as nature is a *passive principle* that receives divine influence, and insofar as it is an *active principle* that directs the being toward the attainment of its end, and, in the last analysis, toward God.<sup>21</sup> By

<sup>19</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.47, a.3.

<sup>20</sup> *Phys.* VIII.1 (252a11).

<sup>21</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.21, a.1, ad 3.

virtue of the doctrine we have presented on the consistency and "substantivity" of natures, we can understand that, just as the nexus of the creatures to God by virtue of the first order is immediate and immanent (God is immediately in all things by essence, presence, and power),<sup>22</sup> the second is indirect and is carried out through the second causes and the hierarchical arrangement of beings.<sup>23</sup> That is, just as the *egressus* (exit) of beings from God depends directly on Him, their *regressus* (return) must occur through the hierarchical order of nature. This is a strong Platonic element in Thomism, though completely integrated in it.<sup>24</sup> Natures have their own consistency, and they imitate God precisely in the fact that they are authentic, though second, causes.<sup>25</sup>

Material beings, for example, give full glory to God and carry out their own mission by praising Him more perfectly through spiritual creatures. Not all beings are called to the *intimate* union with God, but all are called to fulfill an order that in the sublunary world culminates in Man,<sup>26</sup> an order that constitutes the immediate end of each being and has been given it in its very nature. Thus, the imitation of God is the ultimate of all ends, but it is only fulfilled when each thing imitates its superior model and attains its determined end in the hierarchical ensemble of creatures.<sup>27</sup>

Strictly speaking, the ultimate end consists in the *possession* of God, but imitation already implies an intentional possession of the model; and in irrational beings it is perhaps more accurate to speak of imitation rather than possession, as they can only fulfill the latter in a very remote and imperfect way. Non-intellectual natures reach God and fulfill their end through spiritual ones.<sup>28</sup> The supreme order of the cosmos is inhabited by spiritual natures, which include those from Man on, and culminate in God.

The fact that nature is ordered is what makes it good.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, goodness includes an order to an end—to be precise, not the attainment of the end, but merely its ordering; this is why all nature is good, because it fulfills the intrinsic order established by God, inserted by God in the very nature of each being, as order is nothing more than the harmonic manifestation of each nature in mutual relation.

Let us be clear: this order is objective; indeed, it identifies with nature insofar as nature acts within the whole of beings. It follows that the natures of beings possess a determined order precisely because this natural order defines them. The objectivity and consistency of natural order is a mere consequence of the autarchy of second causes. If the latter act by their own accord—as we could say—it is because they are generated in a natural order that is the proper manifestation of the different natures of the universe.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Sum. theol.*, III, q.6, a.1, ad 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> *Contra Gentes*, III.83, is a text by St. Thomas that is barely commented, but it proves his deep historical rootedness and his respect and knowledge of the Christian tradition. In a few lines he mentions the Scriptures, Dionysius, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Boethius, in a patent Platonic spirit.

<sup>25</sup> *Contra Gentes*, III.21.

<sup>26</sup> *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.2, a.3.

<sup>27</sup> See the magnificent chapters by St. Thomas when he discusses the end of things (*De fine rerum*) in his *Summa contra Gentes*, III.16–25.

<sup>28</sup> "Convenienter igitur alia propter substantias intellectuales providentur a Deo" (Thomas Aquinas, *C. Gentes*, III.112).

<sup>29</sup> See Gen 1:4, etc.

<sup>30</sup> With the introduction of the final cause, this order has been completed and hierarchized. See *Contra Gentes*, III.2.

It would be fitting here to discuss the problem of disorder, and to descend to the set of problems that in the scale of beings is put forth by natural order; but we are only interested in its general relationship with the concept of nature, which has given us the key, on the other hand, to develop a study of *natural order* based on the relations that the different natures of beings present. Every nature acts inscribed within an area that is determined by the action of the rest of the natures of the universe, thus constituting *cosmic order*, which is none other than nature considered in its whole. Order is what bestows unity on the universe.

### *Perfection*

Intimately tied to the preceding considerations is the concept of perfection. The end toward which every being tends by virtue of the inclination of its nature, and through which it fulfills the part of the cosmic order that concerns it, is precisely that being's perfection. Furthermore, this is what allows us to speak of superior and inferior natures, that is, more or less perfect according to where they are placed on the hierarchical scale of beings—namely, in the universal order.

From there the intimate concatenation of beings among themselves also follows, since some help others achieve their end and are means for their perfection.<sup>31</sup> This allows us to speak of help from superior natures to inferior ones and of the collaboration of the latter with the former in order to fulfill their respective ends.<sup>32</sup> The world is a *cosmos*, that is, an order of universal collaboration. On the one hand, we have the immanent actions of each being (their nature) and, on the other, the help each receives from superior natures by virtue of the cosmos's universal cooperation. In this way, each being participates in the full perfection of the world. This is the metaphysical—and natural—vision of what will be called “the Communion of the Saints” in the supernatural order. And coordinating the ends of the creatures in a hierarchical fashion will be the precise function of Divine Wisdom.<sup>33</sup>

### *Participation*

If the perfection of a being lies in its higher or lower position in the scale of beings, in the universal order, and this order is measured by the greater or lesser imitation of God—who is the one who has placed in each being, in its nature, the capacity for divine imitation—we can deduce an existing relationship between the concepts here presented and that of participation. Natures are nothing but receptacles of participation in God. Each being participates in God in its nature, and the perfection and substantivity of its nature are nothing but its greater or lesser degree of participation in divine goodness and causality.<sup>34</sup>

If nature is properly that which the being has received from God, it will be the participation of God.<sup>35</sup> God as *natura naturans* means *Deus natura participans*, a participation from which the cosmos receives its order, beauty, and harmony.

We are not saying with this that all natures are perfect, concluded. All natures, because they are essentially dynamic, tend, by virtue of their own dynamism, toward their peculiar end, an end that constitutes their conclusion, their perfection. This is why

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q.15, a.1. See *Contra Gentes*, II.91.

<sup>32</sup> *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.2, a.3.

<sup>33</sup> *Contra Gentes*, II.68.

<sup>34</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.75, a.5, ad 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.12, a.4.

the fundamental law of all being is its desire for perfection, since this corresponds to the inclination toward its own end and, essentially, constitutes the specific dynamism of its very nature.<sup>36</sup>

We understand that a being's perfection may be multiple according to the point of reference taken. A child may be perfect insofar as child, but not insofar as adult person, that is to say, *secundum tempus*.<sup>37</sup> But the point of view may be (and this is what interests us here) nature itself; in this sense, the being whose nature has already fulfilled all of its potentialities will be perfect *secundum natura*. The strength of a nature is the sign of its plenitude, and this is its perfection.<sup>38</sup> By comparing natures between themselves, we will obtain a new scale of perfection whose superior term will be perfection as such,<sup>39</sup> that is, God, in relation to which we will be able to say if a nature is more or less perfect than another. This is how we obtain an objective criterion of perfection.

Fundamentally, this vision of nature as order, which is already found in Plato,<sup>40</sup> can be reduced to the discovery of the intimate relationship between Being and Goodness (also a Platonic discovery). Being is good,<sup>41</sup> and nature fulfills a perfection insofar as it is and exists.<sup>42</sup> Nature shows a tendency toward its plenitude within itself.<sup>43</sup> We must now study it in its double dimension of appetite<sup>44</sup> and end.

### Love

#### *Natural Inclination*

The dynamic quality of nature is clear in its relationship to order, but more as a consequence. Love, on the other hand, is the actual fundamental quality of the dynamism of being, and it allows us to discover the broad and profound connection that there is between both concepts.

We have seen that nature is principle of operations and intrinsic principle of these. Now then, love is analogously the intrinsic principle of the activity of a being. A being's activity, if considered as coming from its own interior, is called *nature*, and insofar it is projected toward others, it is called *love*. This inclination—this tendency inherent in things, which constitutes the essence of nature considered in face of its manifestations, as their point of departure (*terminus a quo*)—is properly *nature*; and this same inclination as indicating the point of arrival (*terminus ad quem*) is nothing other than *love*. In this sense, love is the first potency of nature; it is nature in itself, its most spontaneous effusion, as it is the first principle of motion.<sup>45</sup>

In every being there is an inclination toward determined operations that are natural to it, and that come from the being's very nature. But this tendency must be called "love" not because of an arbitrary whim of nomenclature, but rather because of powerful intrinsic reasons

<sup>36</sup> Taking this truth as point of departure, a fruitful study on the philosophical-scientific problem of the biological evolution of the species could be developed.

<sup>37</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.98, a.2, ad 1.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas, *In VII Phys.*, lect. 6, n. 2.

<sup>39</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.161, a.1, ad 4.

<sup>40</sup> Τάξις, ὅρθοτης, and κόσμος are for Plato being, the nature of things. See the text, suggestive as are all of the philosopher's, in *Gorg.* 506Dff.

<sup>41</sup> See a text written out of a genuine religious experience: Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, III.7.20ff.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentes*, III.16.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.8, a.1.

<sup>45</sup> Scotus Eriugena, *De Divis. Nat.*, I.74.

corroborated by the oldest of traditions. With profound beauty, Parmenides had already said that in the beginning, before all other Gods, the Goddess created Love.<sup>46</sup>

Empedocles, the philosopher of "Faustian nature," set love, along with hate, as the last principle of the motion of things and, more specifically, of the last four elements that constituted the base of all reality.<sup>47</sup> Since there were four kinds of elements irreducible to one another, to which corresponded the characteristics that Parmenides postulated for Being,<sup>48</sup> a principle of motion was needed so that the variety of the world could emerge from the combination of these base elements. This principle of motion—marked with an evaluative judgment, either good or evil—was called "love" and "struggle" from time immemorial.<sup>49</sup> Parmenides already affirmed that the first principle of generation was the love of the Gods,<sup>50</sup> and Hesiod described love as the shaper of primitive chaos.<sup>51</sup>

The reason for this nomenclature is anthropological, as in ourselves, certainly, love is the beginning of all affections, and by generalizing we obtain a concept of love as universal cause.<sup>52</sup> After what has been said in the previous chapter, we can now properly affirm that each nature has, as such, a determined inclination that must be called "natural appetite," or also love.<sup>53</sup> And this is precisely what we affirm when we call love "the first manifestation of nature." We will later have to demonstrate, however, that what we generally call "love" in Man also corresponds to this natural inclination. It is obvious that it will not be the same in all beings. In fact, beings have different natures precisely because the radical inclination of their being that constitutes their very nature is different. Thus, in inanimate natures this tendency will be called *affinity*; in sensitive ones, *appetite*; in intellectual ones, *will*. The term "love" may be reserved for the latter, voluntary tendency; but properly speaking, the concept of love extends to all natural tendencies.

Thus, when we say that every act of will is rooted in love, we understand that every act of our will emerges from our innermost natural inclination, and that what is strictly called love is the most genuine manifestation of our own nature.<sup>54</sup>

### *Will, Intelligence, and Love*

Two affirmations that we have just made need to be proven.

The first says that the radical inclination of intellectual nature is will, namely, that will is the first principle of operations in intellectual beings, and specifically in Man. Giving this thesis greater attention would have prevented more than one discussion among "intellectualists" and "voluntarists," but this is not the place to elaborate on this problem. The intellect, insofar as it is intelligent, is actualized by the intelligible form, in the same way that all natural beings access

<sup>46</sup> Fragm. 13 (Diels).

<sup>47</sup> See Aristotle's testimony in *Met.* I.4 (984b32ff.).

<sup>48</sup> Fragm. 8 (Diels).

<sup>49</sup> See Heraclitus, fragm. 53 (Diels).

<sup>50</sup> See Aristotle, *Met.* I.4 (984b25).

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* I.4 (984b27).

<sup>52</sup> Thomas, *In I Met.*, lect. 5 (n. 102). We have proof of Thomas's Augustinianism in the equality of their conception of the importance of the concept of love. And the reason for this lies in the fact that they both are, above all else, Christian, and this links them much more than Plato and Aristotle could possibly separate them. So St. Augustine says almost the exact same thing in *De Civ. Dei.*, XIV.7, as does St. Thomas in *Sum. theol.*, I.2, q.27, a.4, *sed contra*.

<sup>53</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.60, a.1.

<sup>54</sup> *Contra Gentes*, IV.19.

natural existence in act by virtue of their own "form." The latter originates the inclination of every being toward its own operations and toward its specific end; therefore, it is also necessary that the intellectual being receive the inclination toward its own operations and its specific end from its intelligible form. But this inclination by which the intellect acts toward an end is will, since it is the principle of operations of intellectual nature, and its object is the end and goodness. Therefore, will is the true nature of intellect.<sup>55</sup> Intellect and will are two essential moments of spiritual nature.

The second affirmation that we must prove says that love is the last principle and also the root of all the acts of will. In fact, since will is the natural inclination of intellectual natures (as appetite is of merely sensible ones), it presupposes an affinity and convenience according to the form, which was said to be the principle of natural tendency. Therefore, the will's inclination will be verified as soon as the intelligible form apprehends something as affecting it, or as it being suitable for it. But to have affinity for something is, as such, to love another thing. Therefore, all inclination of the will has its origin in love, and thus all of its other effects, such as desire, pleasure, hate, and so on, come from it. We desire something when we love it and do not have it; we rejoice when we possess what we love; we grow sad when we are separated from it; we hate that which keeps us away from it, and so on. So we can say that the loved thing is the object of spiritual nature, concerning the intellect, as likeness of its species; and concerning will, as the end of motion.<sup>56</sup>

The consequences of this conception are incalculable. It constitutes one of the foundations of the Christian worldview,<sup>57</sup> and both Trinitarian problems<sup>58</sup> as well as anthropological, ethical, and cosmological ones are grounded in it. St. Augustine's "Dilige, et quod vis fac"<sup>59</sup> is based on the idea that, by acting for love, we will act according to nature and, therefore, properly. St. Bernard's affirmation that nobody can look for God unless they have previously found Him,<sup>60</sup> much earlier than the tantamount declaration by Pascal,<sup>61</sup> shares the same foundation: we find before searching because love is the first manifestation of our nature, and it already assumes possession, having found before looking—even though the specific intention of St. Bernard's statement here refers more to the gratitude of grace. It recalls the teaching, in the Gospel, that nobody can go to Christ if the Father does not previously attract them to him.<sup>62</sup>

We are only interested in underlining a few of these consequences here, those related to the central topic of this study.

### *Plato*

The pre-Socratic texts we have quoted already give us an idea of the relationship between nature and love. Love is the original primary force that moves things, and generates them as of the simple elements.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> "La Cr eation toute enti re du S raphin au min rale est homog ne, est reli e dans toutes ses parties par le lien de la charit " [The whole creation, from Seraphim to mineral, is homogeneous, it is connected throughout its parts by the link of love] (P. Claudel, *Pr sence et proph tie* [Fribourg, 1942], 228).

<sup>58</sup> Chapter 19 of Book IV of the *Contra Gentes*, which we have commented, is titled *Quomodo intelligenda sunt quae de Spiritu Sancto dicuntur* (How the affirmations on the Holy Spirit must be understood).

<sup>59</sup> "Love, and do what you like," *In 1 Ep. Johannis*, VII.4.8.

<sup>60</sup> *De Diligendo Deo*, VII.22.

<sup>61</sup> *Pens es* 553.

<sup>62</sup> Jn 6:44.

Plato, faithful disciple of Socrates and of his time, also sustains the heart of this conception, and transferring the interest from the physical world to human φυσις, in the *Symposium*<sup>63</sup> he describes love as the desire for immortality that is fulfilled in generation,<sup>64</sup> as generation is the only means Man has to perpetuate himself.<sup>65</sup> In Plato's subtle psychological analysis of love, he not only shows its connection to nature but also the one that nature has to generation.<sup>66</sup> Even in Man, love is genuinely and in every aspect creator and generator; it is that which produces new natures.

Paraphrasing Plato, we could say that *nature yearns to generate*,<sup>67</sup> although corporal generation (being common to humans and animals) is nothing but an image and an initial approximation of proper human generation, which is generation according to the soul, κατα την ψυχην.<sup>68</sup> And this is the path Plato follows up to a more universal vision of love as a strictly intellectual act, in essence consisting of the love of truth.<sup>69</sup> This is the reason why love leads to virtue.<sup>70</sup> So, love is an essential function of the soul and, therefore, has profound connections to knowledge.

Love is not a mere preparation for Platonic Dialectics, a kind of stimulant for the possessing of truth, but rather it is an integral part of this dialectics. Thanks to love, the soul returns to the Ideas. The soul, in its essential action, is love. Love is born by virtue of the (so Platonic!) duality of the worlds between which the human soul lies. The soul, in fact, imprisoned in the material and sensible world, tends toward the possession of Good in the spiritual region of pure Ideas. Thus the double characteristic of Platonic love: a synthetic nature (the one he so fervently insists upon in the *Symposium*) and an intermediary nature in "everyday" life (since the ultimate object of love is the contemplation of ideas), by means of which love unites our sensible and intellectual natures, that is the only path for the fallen soul to get a reminiscence of the Intelligible.

In sum, it seems as if Plato saw in love the universal law of the cosmos that makes nature live, which moves the soul of the world, which unites in intelligence the intelligible and the sensible, which operates in the ideal world the communion of genres, and which subordinates these, in short, to the ultimate idea of Good under its triple aspect of proportion, beauty, and truth.

#### Aristotle

Plato's subtle *psychological analysis* of love, which there is no need to discuss any further here, is followed by Aristotle's powerful *ontological synthesis*, which begins where his master ended—so that what Aristotle essentially does is continue the line of the pre-Socratic tradition. It is a new example of the continuity of thought that great thinkers so often show. Aristotle is the best Platonist, as Thomas Aquinas is the most faithful Augustinian, if things are judged from the point of view of truth and not from a perspective that absolutizes each

<sup>63</sup> *Symp.* 206B.

<sup>64</sup> *Symp.* 207A, D, E.

<sup>65</sup> *Symp.* 208 B.

<sup>66</sup> See the documented study by L. Robin, *La théorie platonicienne de l'Amour* (Paris, 1908; 2nd ed., 1933). Doctoral dissertation and first text about the Athenian philosopher by the eminent Plato scholar. We draw on it often in our analysis of Plato's thought.

<sup>67</sup> *Symp.* 206C.

<sup>68</sup> *Symp.* 206B; See also 206C and 209A–B.

<sup>69</sup> Plato, *Rep.* VI.490A–B.

<sup>70</sup> See *Symp.* 209A.

one of the systems. Kant himself intended nothing more than to reestablish tradition and a foundation for metaphysics.

Aristotle thus adopts the Platonic meaning of love and incorporates it into his system, fully assimilating it. This love is ontologized so much in his own systematic mind that its primitive original flavor, referring to Man's affective motions, becomes slightly blurred. But this does not mean that love is not the real driving force of all things.

Everything in the world moves thanks to the First Mover, who, for Aristotle, is Divinity. But the First Mover cannot simultaneously be moved, or even be movable; it must, thus, move all things while remaining immobile. And this is only possible through the love with which all things love the First Mover. Aristotle identified love with motion to such an extent that, in order to preserve God's immobility, he denies His love for the world. This is why the First Mover moves insofar as He is *loved*,<sup>71</sup> that is, desirable and intelligible by the creatures.<sup>72</sup> With this, we see that for Aristotle love also contains, in brief, appetition and intellection, as it is the nucleus of all nature.

### *The Love of God*

But this very same thought receives a new dimension within Christianity.

Not only does God love the creatures first<sup>73</sup> (contrary to Aristotle's opinion), but the creatures are the fruits of their love, and the more perfect they are, the more they are loved. Furthermore, the creatures' movement toward their Creator is their love for Him, and this is nothing but a tenuous reflection of the divine love that has previously affected them. Love is the connection that ties all things together and to God, giving place to cosmic order as a result of the manifestation of each nature.<sup>74</sup>

*Love from God's point of view* elucidates many a point on nature as an instrument of Divinity, as was previously stated. In the first place, in God there is love since in Him there is will,<sup>75</sup> and in Him there is will due to the fact that in Him there is intellect<sup>76</sup>—as we have already seen that will immediately follows intelligence, and that there cannot be intelligence without will. Moreover, because God is His own intelligence, He is also His own volition. But goodness is the cause of love, since it is its proper object and it acts as cause of its very action. Goodness, in fact, is connatural and proportional to each nature.<sup>77</sup> But in God the order is inverted, and while, for us, to love is to wish goodness upon someone,<sup>78</sup> the love of God is what inspires and creates goodness in things.<sup>79</sup> In this way, the alluded principle that all action is carried out for the love of goodness is also, and especially, fulfilled in God.<sup>80</sup>

Although God acts by love, as all beings do, His love is a divine love. In God, the love-nature relation we discovered at the beginning is inverted. We have seen that God acts out of love, like any being, but we also said that the end of God's creating action was nature. That is

<sup>71</sup> *Met.* XII.7 (1072b3); see Thomas Aquinas, *In XII Met.*, lect. 7.

<sup>72</sup> *Met.* XII.7 (1072a26; see also 1072b3).

<sup>73</sup> See 1 Jn 4:19.

<sup>74</sup> See Scotus Eriugena, *De Div. Nat.* I.74.

<sup>75</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, I, q.20, a.1.

<sup>76</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, I, q.19, a.1.

<sup>77</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.27, a.1.

<sup>78</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.20, a.1, ad 3.

<sup>79</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.20, a.2.

<sup>80</sup> See Dionys., *De Div. Nom.*, IV.9–10.

to say, seen from God, nature is the terminus *ad quem* of His creating operation, and love is its terminus *a quo*. This is why God acts more eminently because of love than the creatures do. Love, from this point of view, is the cause of nature. The love of God instills goodness in things, while creation instills nature in them.

This is how we achieve a new, very important vision that strengthens what we said earlier on the relationship between nature and God. If God is love, and He is simultaneously Creator of nature, then *natura naturata*, insofar as participation or end of an action by *natura naturans*, will also be love, although with the necessary ontological degradation.

Ultimately, the etymological meaning is maintained. St. Hilary, followed by St. Thomas, in regard to Jesus Christ's statement to the Jews that, if God were their Father, they would also love him,<sup>81</sup> emphatically says that, with this, Christ proves that the cause of love comes from birth.<sup>82</sup> Namely, that love is fruit of nature; it is its first manifestation.

The essence of nature is love, and if nature and love identify in God, in the creatures we discover relationships that are all the more intimate the more in depth we go into the analysis of being.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, love is the unifying link of the entire universe and the internal force that animates it.<sup>84</sup> It is the autarchic force of nature. Love is, along with intelligence, the most perfect reflection of Divinity. The cold hierarchy of values of modern axiology is a derivation of the warm Scholastic conception of the natural love of each thing toward the Whole, or the whole of the universe of which it forms part, not as thing (as a mere thing *buried* to existence<sup>85</sup>) but rather as participation in a God who is love.<sup>86</sup> This is why, for mystical temperaments, even for their reason, love is the best bridge to transcendence and the best demonstration of the reality of God—not a rational demonstration of His existence, but rather a deduction that absolute love must be real if they can experiment its effusions in their own beings.

God uses nothing but love, says St. John of the Cross:<sup>87</sup> love is the only instrument of God, which coincides with His own essence and with the essence of our nature, which we have identified with love. Our nature is so much really love that only through love does Man reach his maximum perfection (the beatific vision). And the means to elevate our nature can be nothing else but to award it a new love.<sup>88</sup>

### *The Love for God*

Analogously, from the point of view of the creatures, there exists a tendency of every being toward its own end by virtue of its very nature. Ultimately, this is God's universal appetite, since the fundamental end of all beings is God, and they have received the strength and impulse to love Him from Him. It is the love for God that all—both conscious and

<sup>81</sup> Jn 8:42.

<sup>82</sup> Hilar., *VI de Trin.*, quoted by Thomas, *Catena Aurea* on Jn 8:42. Hence that to God's new love as our Father there corresponds a "new nature."

<sup>83</sup> Bearing in mind that all motion may, in a certain sense, be considered appetition, the definitions of nature and love formally coincide as the last roots of operation; see Thomas, *In Div. Nom.*, IV.9.

<sup>84</sup> Dionysius the Aeropagite calls love a self-moving ("auto-mobile") force, mover of the world: *De Div. Nom.* IV.17.

<sup>85</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, § 38.

<sup>86</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.28, a.3, *sed contra*.

<sup>87</sup> *Cántico espiritual*, 27.18.

<sup>88</sup> Eternal life, which implies a previous elevation of our nature, comes from this love of God to the world.

unconscious<sup>89</sup>—things have, as the Christian tradition has always defended, and it acquires metaphysical confirmation when identifying Supreme Goodness with God and defining Goodness as the adequate end of all appetition.<sup>90</sup> So Goodness will be that toward which all things tend, and—notwithstanding the particular forms under which it is the object of the different tendencies of nature—it will identify with God. Hence the song of all creation to God, beginning and end of all things.<sup>91</sup> It is the famous "weight of love" in St. Augustine,<sup>92</sup> which "weighs upward," lifting the creatures toward the Creator.<sup>93</sup>

There is a twofold motion. On the one hand, *attraction*. This requires that the attractor, in a certain sense, be inside the attracted being. In this sense, all of nature has the intention of God within itself, since the desired object, that which is desirable, moves the appetite, bestowing its own intentions upon it. This is why love is uniting. And, on the other hand, there is the motion of the *impulse*, whose end is the attractor. The appetite (all of nature, in this case) tends toward the desirable goal, turning that which was its beginning into the end of motion. This is why God is end and beginning of all things, because He acts by moving nature as its beginning and end.<sup>94</sup>

There is, thus, a general appetite, or, strictly speaking, a universal love of all of creation toward its Creator: a love that constitutes the very end of the existence of beings, since *through it* they fulfill the end for which they have been created,<sup>95</sup> that is, to give glory to God, and *with it* they tend to imitate the divine goodness,<sup>96</sup> since by means of their operations, whose principle is love, things tend toward a likeness with God.<sup>97</sup> More exactly, things are more like God the more they participate in divine causality, simultaneously being cause for others. The more the causal power, the more perfection in beings. But things are causes of one another precisely because of their operations, so that, once again, we see a connection to love.<sup>98</sup>

This appetition of God, which becomes an imitation of Him carried out by all of nature and which is founded on the likeness between Divinity and the creature, is in fact corroborated in its very foundation by the theory of love.<sup>99</sup> Love in fact possesses that δυναμις ενοποιος of which Dionysius speaks,<sup>100</sup> that unifying force,<sup>101</sup> that transforming power that turns the lover into the loved one, precisely because it assumes a preceding likeness. After everything we have said about love, this appears as a mere consequence. The object of love, as a natural inclination of every being, is goodness as well as the perfection of the being; it is that which is connatural and proportioned to it, as we have pointed out, that is, that which is similar to it.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>89</sup> See Augustine, *Soliloquium*, I.1.2.

<sup>90</sup> See St. Thomas's profound cosmic vision in his *In II Sent.*, d.1, q.2, a.1, sol.

<sup>91</sup> See the section on *Quomodo Deus sit finis omnium* in *Contra Gentes*, III.18.

<sup>92</sup> *Confessions*, XIII.9.

<sup>93</sup> William of St.-Thierry, *De Natura et Dignitate Divini Amoris*, I.2.

<sup>94</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.26, a.2.

<sup>95</sup> See Prov 16:4 in the *Vulgate* version.

<sup>96</sup> *Contra Gentes*, III.19.

<sup>97</sup> *Contra Gentes*, III.21.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ratio imitatur naturam* [reason imitates nature]. Thomas suggestively says in *Sum. theol.*, I, q.60, a.5.

<sup>100</sup> *De Div. Nom.*, c. IV.15.

<sup>101</sup> Augustine describes love as *vita quaedam copulans vel copulare appetens* [a kind of life that creates unity, or longs for unity] (*De Trin.*, VIII.10).

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q.22, a.1, ad 3.

Furthermore, considering the issue as of the object and not as of the subject as we have done up to now, we can affirm that likeness is the cause of love, since something will be desirable if it is adequate and appropriate to the desiring subject.<sup>103</sup> Likeness between subject and object is, thus, the principle of love.<sup>104</sup> This is why the love of God as Father truly turns us into His children, since the love of God creates, when loving, the likeness that the loved object must have in order to be able to love God.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, the end of every creature is love, since to love is to be united with one's beloved in a more perfect union than that of knowledge, since the known object is in the knowing subject according to the (limited, in this case) capacity of the latter, while the beloved is in the lover according to the mode of the former (God, in this case).<sup>106</sup>

This last affirmation—that love unites more than knowledge does—once again corroborates the given concept of love, as only this offers a plausible explanation of our thesis, on which the majority of Scholastic philosophers of the most varied tendencies would agree.<sup>107</sup> Certainly, nothing can be desired or loved if it is not known; but something similar to the relationship between rational and sensible knowledge happens with this. Will, love, does not move if there is no intelligence first, just as reason does not understand unless the senses have previously worked; but in the same way that the latter are pure means—and not causes—for reason to understand, so is intelligence the necessary medium for will to love, but not its cause. This is why there can be a disproportion between love and knowledge to the advantage of love, because the ultimate root of nature is love, before knowledge. Or, to be more precise, the spiritual nature essentially, *simpliciter*, consists of intellect and will, without any priority of either.<sup>108</sup>

### *Caritas and Cupiditas*

This conception of love can clearly be seen in the approach to the problem of Man's and the angel's *natural love* for God as opposed to the *love of charity*, which was of such concern during the Middle Ages. Ultimately, what was being considered was a different conception of nature, and more specifically of human nature, since at issue was a concept of nature closed in itself, which some defended and some challenged. On the one hand, only a nature inclined toward itself was recognized and, hence, only one natural love: the selfish one. The function of grace was very well explained with this: to instill a new love in Man, free of any egocentric contamination. But considering *caritas* and *cupiditas* (this is how those who supported their complete separation designated the two loves) as essentially irreducible, in such a way that charity was identified with grace and grace was opposed to nature, the equality of the latter with *cupiditas* was defended very early on, that is, the belief that *natura semper in se curva est* (nature always retreats into itself), namely Michel de Bay's doctrine. This is why the opposite

<sup>103</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.27, a.4, ad 2.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Aelred de Rielvaux, *Speculum Caritatis* I.1.

<sup>106</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.28, a.1, ad 3.

<sup>107</sup> Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, Matthew of Aquasparta, Duns Scotus, Thomas Aquinas, etc.

<sup>108</sup> "Contingit quod aliquid plus ametur quam cognoscatur, quia potest perfecte amari etiam si non perfecte cognoscatur" [Something can be loved much more than it is known because it can be perfectly loved even if it is not perfectly known] (*Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.27, a.2, ad 2). It is interesting that St. Thomas is the one to affirm this, while St. Augustine, without contradicting him, in one place says, "Quanto maior cognitio, tanto maior erit dilectio" [The greater knowledge is, the greater will love be] (*Lib. de Spiritu et Littera*, XXXVI).

judgment prevailed: if you do not admit in Man and in angel a natural, uninterested love for God, grace would be something more like a *counter-nature* than a *super-nature*, since it could not elevate existing human love, but rather it would have to visibly deviate from its natural, selfish tendency.<sup>109</sup>

But, on the other hand, if natural love is already so pure that it is able to love God above all things, putting aside its own good, then the elevation of grace runs the risk of looking like a mere perfectioning of grade, so that its strictly supernatural and free quality is lost. This is a new example of the Christian theological polarity to which we alluded earlier. But we are not interested here in how the philosophers and theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saved orthodoxy, but rather in showing how the proposed antinomy is solved in function of the concepts we have presented. This solution was, historically, the work of St. Thomas when he did not admit the irreducibility, until then generally accepted, between selfish and altruistic love.<sup>110</sup>

If every being—Thomas says—naturally loves its own goodness, and its ultimate goodness is God, every creature by loving itself will also love God, or, more precisely, by loving the proper object of its love, goodness, it will simultaneously love itself and God. So, both types of love are the same.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, sin is nothing but disorder, a distortion of the order of love; therefore, if God were not our goodness, we would not have to love Him.<sup>112</sup> But from this it seems to follow that one's own good is the ultimate reason of love, and that, therefore, we should love ourselves more than any other being—which contradicts the true order of things, which requires that we love God above all else, and that this love not be exclusively reserved to grace by declaring that even though Man understands that he must love God above all things, he cannot do this without supernatural help. This is the doctrine of Man's inner splitting, on which Pascal, Protestantism, and much of so-called modern philosophy feed. (Another thing is the de facto incapacity of human nature fallen from loving God above all things.)<sup>113</sup>

The difficulty is solved by drawing the last consequences from the concept of love as it has been expounded. Certainly, every being loves what is its own over what is foreign, what is closer over what is further away, and nature demonstrates this,<sup>114</sup> and this is written in the Bible.<sup>115</sup> But we have seen that God is the most intimate core of the nature of things,<sup>116</sup> He is their supreme Good, and He is in them as *Principle/Beginning* so that—thanks to love—He may also turn into *End*. It is therefore natural to love God more than oneself, because by loving Him one loves oneself in one's innermost profoundness; with this we reestablish the order postulated by reason.<sup>117</sup>

This is, explicitly, St. Augustine's opinion, who sensed—although he did not quite comprehend—that to love God is to love oneself, because he perceived that to love oneself

<sup>109</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, I, q.60, a.1, ad 3.

<sup>110</sup> See, e.g., *De Veritate*, q.22, a.1.

<sup>111</sup> And this is what the Christian tradition always believed. Already in the year 208, Clement of Alexandria wrote, "He who serves God, serves himself" (*Stromata* IV.23).

<sup>112</sup> *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.26, a.13, ad 3.

<sup>113</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.109, a.3.

<sup>114</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentes*, I.102. See *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.26, a.13, *sed contra*.

<sup>115</sup> *Ben Sirach* 13:15.

<sup>116</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, dist.37, a.1.

<sup>117</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.60, a.5, ad 3.

without loving God is not to truly love oneself.<sup>118</sup> This truth is recognized by all mystical temperaments, and constitutes an expression of the unity of the cosmos that love realizes, and of the paradox that he who loves his life will lose it, and vice versa.<sup>119</sup> It is a paradox that finds its explanation in the very nature of love and that proves, therefore, that the Christian life, which requires one to lose oneself, must be a life of love, since only this can fulfill the evangelical condition. In fact, if the activity of knowledge is to turn into another, insofar as other, that of love is to *lose* oneself in the other, insofar as the other becomes more oneself than one's own self.

If the universe constitutes itself in a Whole thanks to the unifying bond of love, it is understandable that love or the natural inclination of one part tends more toward the Whole than toward itself. Therefore, loving God above all else is completely natural not only for Man and angel, but for any—rational or irrational—creature as well. God is Goodness and, therefore, the object of the love of the whole universe; and we would have no way of loving God in ourselves if our goodness did not depend on Him.<sup>120</sup> Love is our natural, most intimate law, as it is founded in our very contingency. *All strength is love.*<sup>121</sup>

### *The Transition to the Psychological Level*

This last affirmation bridges physics and metaphysics. Medieval authors could speak of "forces" because they were anchored in the natural tendency of beings. But with the gnoseological approach that philosophy has adopted as of Descartes, that viewpoint can no longer be held, since love becomes an object of pure psychology. Thus, for Descartes, love is a mere commotion of the soul produced by the motion of animal spirits, by virtue of which the soul tends to join the object that it deems convenient.<sup>122</sup> Once the *vis* has been eradicated from love and from metaphysics, and it is interpreted in a nominalist fashion, it turns into the physical concept of "force"; and when science needs a concept that is a bit more complete, it will resort to the old term "energy" with which any principle of motion can be designated by applying it analogically.

In the Middle Ages, the analogy was not taken from the lowest level in the world, the material, but rather from the highest—and in this sense, it was a more proper analogy. This is why they could say that what moved the universe was love.<sup>123</sup> Today's world is moved by energy.

The importance of love becomes more and more restricted until it turns into a pathological feeling in Kant,<sup>124</sup> excluding both the love of God and the pure love toward our neighbor, in spite of the pantheistic reaction by Spinoza, who, in his own way, resuscitates the Platonic conception of love. But this *amor Dei intellectualis*, eternal<sup>125</sup> and inseparable from nature,<sup>126</sup> cannot prevent an increasingly subjective conception of love—with which even Leibniz's metaphysical genius appears to agree, in spite of the ontological charge of the elemental *appetitions* of the monads (which ultimately do justice to the conception we have

<sup>118</sup> *Tract. in Iohann.*, CXXIV.21.

<sup>119</sup> Jn 12:25.

<sup>120</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.60, a.5, ad 2.

<sup>121</sup> Augustine, *De Moribus Eccl.*, XV. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.56, a.3, ad 1.

<sup>122</sup> Descartes, *Pass. anim.* II.79. The merely psychological vision of love is already beginning.

<sup>123</sup> See Dionysius, *De Div. Nom.* IV.14.

<sup>124</sup> See his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, I.1.B, Part 2.

<sup>125</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics* V, prop. 33.

<sup>126</sup> *Ethics* V, prop. 37.

defended here of love as an ontological tendency, natural to every being)—a conception that, in a way, is also recognized by idealism, monism, and later systems. So human love, passionate love, clearly recognized in the Middle Ages,<sup>127</sup> becomes independent of any connection with the rest of living forces of the universe—because, in one word, it is an adulterated love.<sup>128</sup>

### End

#### *Nature and Final Cause*

The fundamental characteristic of nature as *principle* can always work as a basis for relating it to other concepts. Aristotle<sup>129</sup> often uses the term *ἀρχή* (principle) as a synonym of *αὐτία* (cause). St. Thomas delimits their difference insofar as *principle* connotes a certain order, and *cause*, a determined influx in the caused thing.<sup>130</sup> Accordingly, recalling the given definition of principle, and dividing the *principium rei* into negative and positive, among the latter we find those that influence being with reference to existence, that is, causes—understanding by cause, in keeping with tradition, the positive principle out of which something really proceeds as for its own existence: that is, the principle on which a being's reason of existence really depends. But among the causes, among those that are necessarily followed by something else,<sup>131</sup> there is one that has primacy, and this is the final cause,<sup>132</sup> the fourth and last cause, which Aristotle is proud of having discovered, as he himself puts it.<sup>133</sup>

In fact, it is the last principle on which all change depends, since all actions (as we have seen) are fulfilled for an end, which is, precisely, the final cause. And in regard to the other causes, we can state that matter does not attain form if it is not moved by an agent, since nothing takes itself from potentiality to actuality, and the agent only moves with the intention of an end, as otherwise it would not determine itself toward one thing above another.

Now then, to draw a conclusion, we see the identification of the final cause with nature—and with love—as we have already said. This final cause that moves all things provokes natural appetite in them, love, and, insofar as it represents something good for each being (in short, a participation in Supreme Goodness as ultimate end of all things), it implies a close relationship with God.

#### *The Aristotelian Approach*

The pre-Socratic approach to the problem of φύσις already searched for that principle, which, strictly speaking, could be the *cause* of change and motion. Aristotle centers the problem in the search for causes<sup>134</sup> when he affirms that what matters with regard to the

<sup>127</sup> See the suggestive book by E. Gilson, *Héloïse et Abélard*.

<sup>128</sup> If not adulterine. See, for example, the concept of love in Goethe, or in Maurois (for example, *Climats*) in our times. It is the love of man as a passionate animal with knowledge, but without reason, with psychological acuteness but without an ethical sense. We can contrast this with the drama of Abelard and Eloise, and observe that passion is not what was lacking in the Middle Ages, but rather it is intellectuality that is missing in modernity.

<sup>129</sup> See, for example, *Phys.* I.1 (184a15).

<sup>130</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In Met.*, lect. I (n.751). See *Sum. theol.*, I.33, a.1, ad 1.

<sup>131</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In V Met.*, lect. I (n.749). See also *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.75, a.1, ad 2.

<sup>132</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.1, a.2.

<sup>133</sup> See Aristotle, *Met.* I.7 (988b6–16).

<sup>134</sup> *Phys.* II.3 (194b16).

phenomenon of corruption and generation and all of physical change<sup>135</sup>—that is, with regard to the problem of nature—is to know these things; and that we only know a thing when we have grasped its cause.<sup>136</sup>

So the question about nature becomes the question about its causes. But although all of these are the concern of the physicist (literally, "he who is interested in nature"), one of them plays a preeminent role. In fact, the changes of the universe that provoke greater philosophical impression are those that seem to be the most intelligible because they are regularly repeated, that is, those that determinedly tend toward a certain end. These belong to two classes: they either have our *intellect* as their cause,<sup>137</sup> or they are the eminently natural changes, such as generation, growth, etc.; in one word, those that have *nature* as their cause.<sup>138</sup> This is why some things are "by nature" and others "for other causes."<sup>139</sup> Nature, as well as the mind, is thus cause,<sup>140</sup> and specifically one of the final causes—in fact, the most important one of these.<sup>141</sup>

We are not interested in following Aristotle's critique of mechanicism or his establishment of the end of nature<sup>142</sup> until his conclusion that nature is cause, and final cause,<sup>143</sup> but only to stress the connection of this concept with everything we have said up to now.

The final cause, understood as that *cuius causa fit aliquid*,<sup>144</sup> is not only the end of motion and, as such, opposite to the origin of the same (efficient cause), but it is also the first thing in intention, and thus it constitutes the goodness of all nature, since goodness is what every being desires.<sup>145</sup> This is why the final cause has reason of goodness<sup>146</sup> and why it moves by being desired,<sup>147</sup> namely, by means of love—as the first philosophers already insinuated,<sup>148</sup> though in an imperfect manner; since by considering love or friendship as cause of all things, they did not discover its characteristic of final cause, which is the proper reason why goodness is cause.<sup>149</sup>

### *End, Order, and Intelligence*

In this concept, the multiplicity of nuances of the problem of nature converges once more. By asking about the cause of a being, we are asking about its constitutive principle, and at the same time—since we *know* something when we grasp its cause—we are looking for its principle of intelligibility.<sup>150</sup> By asking about the final cause, we end up in God as the ultimate end of all things; we are asking about the love that every being has within itself, and about the order that beings fulfill by acting as effects of their final cause.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>135</sup> *Phys.* II.3 (194b21).

<sup>136</sup> *Phys.* II.3 (194b17).

<sup>137</sup> A perfectly Aristotelian—not only Platonic—conception.

<sup>138</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* II.5. See *Met.* XI (1065a26–30).

<sup>139</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (192b8).

<sup>140</sup> *Phys.* II.6 (198a11).

<sup>141</sup> Aristotle, *De Part. Animal.* I.1 (639b14).

<sup>142</sup> See *Phys.* II.8 (198b10–199b33).

<sup>143</sup> *Phys.* II.8 (199b32).

<sup>144</sup> "That be-cause of which something happens." See Thomas Aquinas, *In I Met.*, lect. 4 (n. 70).

<sup>145</sup> Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* I.1(1094a2).

<sup>146</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In III Met.*, I, lect.1 (n.374).

<sup>147</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Ver.*, XXII.2.

<sup>148</sup> See Aristotle, *Met.* I.7 (988a33).

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In I Met.*, c.1, lect.2 (n.179).

<sup>151</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In III Sent.*, dist.28, q.1, a.2.

Thence the close relationship between this section and the one referring to order, as order is nothing but the manifestation and consequence of the realm of finality. Order prevails where all things aspire to their due end. They are, thus, two expressions of one same reality.<sup>152</sup>

Aristotle bases his conception that nature acts according to an end mainly on four arguments. This teleological consideration of the universe forms the very core of his metaphysics.

From what we said in the previous chapter, we may conclude that the proper and *natural* activity innate in the very entrails of a being necessarily tends toward a determined end, which characterizes each being in particular. An *Intelligence* is here necessary, as an end cannot be explained without an intelligence that establishes it as such, since only the intellect can go outside of itself in order to constitute something external as its own end. This is something that idealism<sup>153</sup> saw very clearly, though unilaterally, and its error lay in constituting the human spirit (individual or transcendental) instead of the divine one as the *norm* for this end of things. In its end, the agent's appetite is alleviated, since appetite does not ontologically come from anywhere but an intellectual nature (internal or external), which has put this activity in the being. We cannot forget that everything is *being*, even if analogically so, and that the first "analogized" is the Pure Intellect.

We must point out—and this consideration will shed light on more than one problem—that the mere analysis of finality carries certain spirituality within itself; that is, the *ad extra* tendency in a being entails certain extroversion, which, analogously to reflection, can only be carried out by an immaterial being. In fact, appetition, insofar as it involves going outside oneself toward that which is desired (under the form of a desire, a volition, or any other thing), implies a determined contact with the end, a contact that clearly cannot be of a material nature; thus, the being that carries it out cannot be material either. This is why pure materialism cannot admit finality.

Now then, it is not necessary for this intentionality to come from nature itself as such, but insofar as it participates of a tension inserted into it by some Intellect. That is, in material beings appetition would be a force inoculated *ab extra*—although *in* nature itself, so that it never stops being immanent to it, in a certain sense—by an ordering Intelligence; while in spiritual beings, appetition would be the consequence of their intellectual activity, which in Scholastic terms has been called "elicit appetite." This clarification specifies a bit more, from another point of view, what we said in the previous chapter on the dynamism of being. Dynamism is essential to being; but *omne quod movetur, ab alio movetur*<sup>154</sup> (everything that moves is moved by something else); that is to say, this dynamism is received.

Only the spiritual being possesses its own—albeit participated—power to move. And this is how the question of the intrinsicity or extrinsicity of finality in beings is also solved. The metaphysical—not logical—intentionality that all appetition entails is intrinsic insofar as it is the being itself that possesses it, and it is extrinsic insofar as it is nothing but an external attraction. This is why there are two types of motion: by impulse and by attraction. The former represents an intrinsic appetition which belongs solely to the intellect, which, once it knows the truth, aspires to it with the will, insofar as truth is seen as goodness. And the latter refers to the attainment of its end by material things—but more by virtue of the force of attraction of the former than of the power of impulsion of the latter. This does not exclude the fact that all natures *tend* toward their own good.

<sup>152</sup> And this is how Aristotle understands it. See *De Part. Anim.* I.1 (641b18–25) where, starting from the *order* of the heavens, he concludes that they have a determined *end*.

<sup>153</sup> A connection that Aristotle already saw very profoundly.

<sup>154</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, I, q.2, a.3.

We are only discussing the essence of this *tension* here. Material nature is attracted by God, and this is why it fulfills its end completely. Spiritual nature tends toward God by its own (though received) *impulse*; and this is why it may fail in this drive and not fully achieve its end. These are the problems that surround sin. Since the force of attraction comes from the Supreme Being, it is indefectible; the power of impulsion toward the ultimate end, on the other hand, may deviate, it may even be corrupted by the desire of a partial and truncated end. This is the *mysterium iniquitatis*<sup>155</sup> of the spiritual world.

### *The Intentionality of Nature*

In more classical terms, every agent acts for an end,<sup>156</sup> since every agent acts by *nature* or by *intellect*. In the latter case there is no doubt that the agent acts according to an end, preconceived by the intellect;<sup>157</sup> but in the irrational agent there is also a preexisting likeness to the natural effect—in the sense that, just as in the rational agent's mind there is an idea (likeness) of the effect to which it aspires by its actions, so there is also in the material nature a certain likeness between effects and their causes. There is, in short, a natural law that governs these processes, a law whose compliance can be considered—and constitutes—the end of such process. We must bear in mind that the end only possesses reason of causality insofar as it is in the *intention* of the intentional agent that provokes it;<sup>158</sup> for the same reason we pointed out that only a spiritual being is properly capable of acting toward an end. Material beings are driven, elevated to it, by an inclination that is certainly natural, but inoculated, as it were, by an intelligence. As one can see, the consequences of this consideration will be very valuable in the well-known modern and classical discussion on Man's natural appetite for divine vision.

A conclusion that directly affects nature can be drawn from what we have said. A being's tendency (whether it be its own or communicated) to fulfill its own end and, on the other hand, the influence the end exerts so as to be reached, shows that the created being does not yet possess its full perfection, and that this consists in the possession of its end. But this end, as the final goal of the appetition, will be the actual nature of the thing. This is why the end is, in a certain way, first, even if it is the last thing in the order of fulfillment, analogously as the whole is previous to the part.<sup>159</sup> All things tend toward the plenitude of their own nature.<sup>160</sup>

From this we can conclude that the different ways of acting toward an end correspond to as many classes of natures. Three significant groups have appeared already: natures that are dragged toward an end, that is, the material beings; those that voluntarily tend toward the end, the spiritual beings; and finally, *that nature* (God) acting for an end that identifies itself with His action.<sup>161</sup> In the first two cases, the end as motive force is not the same as their being; it is extrinsic, and therefore supposes the acquisition of something the being did not possess. The tendency toward an end implies an imperfection that is on its way to perfection. God, on the other hand, is absolutely liberal, as His end cannot consist in receiving anything nor in becoming more perfect, but rather in giving—and giving *Himself*—when He acts. Furthermore, divine goodness is the end of all things.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>155</sup> 2 Thess 2:7.

<sup>156</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentes*, III.2.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.1, a.1, ad 1.

<sup>159</sup> Aristotle, *Polit.* I.2 (1253a20).

<sup>160</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, dist.1, q.2, a.1, sol—unlike God, who acts for the sake of the end.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, dist.3, q.4, a.2.

<sup>162</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, I, q.44, a.4.

One consequence that emerges from admitting nature's dynamism is that nature possesses a determined finality. In the Aristotelian interpretation of motion, understood with the real notions of act and potency, the finality of nature appears as a mere corollary. In fact, we may discuss the proper end of each nature or the ultimate end of the universe, but we cannot deny that there is a determined end that conditions the actions of each nature.

A mere dialectical analysis proves this: every agent, when it acts, achieves something, goes toward something, tends toward a final goal. Well, then, this goal is—by definition—the end of the agent. Every agent acts by virtue of an end, because every action entails a point of departure and a point of arrival. And the latter (which may be different from the one intended by the agent) is, by definition, the *end in point*.

But the end is not only beyond the agent, but rather it is, in a certain way (*intentionaliter*) in it, conditioning the act itself. Every end has a certain reason of causality. The end toward which something tends is present intentionally in the point of departure and somewhat influences this tendency. But in order to explain this fact thoroughly and value it within its proper limits, the notions of act and potency become necessary once again.<sup>163</sup>

### *The Potentiality of the End*

In fact, if the agent did not tend toward a determined effect, it would be indifferent to all ends and, therefore, it would never opt for one or another. The agent can only be freed from this "indifference" if it is determined by something that impels it toward a concrete end; but this "something" must somehow be in the end of the action itself since, in a certain way, it must be responsible for the fact that the agent reaches it and not another, different, end.<sup>164</sup>

In more specific terms: every act is a motion, and every motion entails an end. Now then, motion would not be such if it were not an act of the potency qua potency, that is, if the act of the present moment did not contain, in potency, the act of the following moment—since the potency of which motion is the act is nothing but the end of motion, as this is precisely what is achieved by passing from potency to act. Thus, the end is already, virtually, in the point of departure, and this potential determination, insofar as it is considered before its own fulfillment in the present becoming, is what is called the end. And this is precisely the reason why goodness has reason of end,<sup>165</sup> as we have already said, because it is the goal of appetition.<sup>166</sup>

Putting aside other controversies on the issue of finality, we must retain here the quality of priority that the final cause has over the rest of causes—since, if it is the cause of causes<sup>167</sup> and, without it, no other causes can enter into activity,<sup>168</sup> this is due to its intimate relationship with nature. If we know a thing when we know its causes,<sup>169</sup> and among these, the final cause is primary, when we know the latter, we will have grasped the nature of a thing. Nature is nothing but the end and the final cause; this is how Aristotle emphatically puts it.<sup>170</sup> It is the one that carries all the operations of a being into effect and brings the other causes into play. Teleology is immanent to the thing itself; nature is essentially teleological, because it is

<sup>163</sup> See above, where we dealt with this issue.

<sup>164</sup> *Contra Gentes*, III.2.

<sup>165</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.5, a.4.

<sup>166</sup> Aristotle, *Ethic. Nic.* I.1 (1094a2).

<sup>167</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Ver.*, q.28, a.7.

<sup>168</sup> *Contra Gentes*, III.17.

<sup>169</sup> Aristotle, *De an.* II.2 (413a13). See also *Phys.* I.1 (184a12).

<sup>170</sup> *Phys.* II.2 (194a28).

activity and cannot exist without an end. This is why we said that the end is nature insofar as it is perfect, insofar as it is the perfection of the second act that constitutes the activity of being itself.

And this intrinsic end of nature itself is also what acts as base to explain not only the regularity of natural laws, especially in cosmology, but also the order of the world and Divine Providence. In sum, the entire conception of the world rests on the idea of nature.

#### *The Idealist Interpretation*

The problem of the finality of nature has been solved in a very different manner from Descartes on. By setting the problem within the epistemological field, the teleological issue will acquire other shades of meaning that will become the main concern in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in the moral and cosmological fields. The problem of evil and disorder preoccupies thinkers greatly, but the issue will be solved by Kant's distortion of the problem, or more precisely, by his drawing the last consequences of the Cartesian approach. Nature will act toward an end, and precisely this finality that our mind produces is what constitutes it into nature. Teleology will become an indispensable condition of our thinking, but it will not imply anything in the reality of the thing "in itself," beyond thought.

But we are not here interested in anything but showing the connection that realism establishes between the final cause and nature, and that not even idealism can deny, since for idealism nature will continue to be the principle of the intelligibility, order, finality, and desirability of things, even if all these metaphysical dimensions—according to idealism—are only inscribed in the human mind.

## Appendix

### NATURAL PROCESSES

The following discussions may be of some interest for a quite different reason (although they all concern the final cause we have dealt with): the concept of the "supernatural."

We must not forget that one of the services philosophy offers possesses an *ancillary* characteristic, and that—a noble service, indeed—it is one of developing the basic concepts that the diverse sciences will later play with. Because of this, philosophical speculation sometimes appears to be a simple nominalist game, as when it concentrates more on the vital function of the concepts it handles than on their material content.

The section on the "dialectics of the natural" may be considered a somewhat dangerous game in that it limits itself to developing—in a predominantly dialectic manner—the processes that, in a certain way, can be called natural as a philosophical continuation of the intricate theological problem of the supernatural. It is obvious that, if Man's divinization has to be possible, it must occur in the line of operation, and as a consequence, natural processes are the ones that will primarily undergo modifications.

Besides, any integral anthropology that wishes to take on the supernatural fact must begin from a theological phenomenology of Man's activities and, consequently, it must specify *which* processes are natural, and especially *how* these processes act—a problem that does not concern us here anyway.

The final section (on the "extranatural") is of an erudite and cultural interest, and is full of suggestions that however cannot be further developed in this study.

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Because of nature's dynamic quality, the main importance of this concept lies in its capacity to explain the activity of beings. Nature as the first principle of operations will originate natural processes.

However, it is fitting to ask whether there are other principles of activity of beings, since it is perfectly possible that, if nature is the true, intimate force of all things, there is no *other* principle able to influence these. But nature is also the last energetic redoubt of things, because it is their internal principle; so that there also exists the possibility that *external* influences are modifying the activity of things. Therefore, it is necessary to know which processes are natural in order to distinguish them from those that are not.

But there is still another, new possibility of distinction within natural processes themselves. If nature is the first principle of action of a being, its most intimate and *ultimate* dynamism, this does not rule out that there also be other, *closer* principles of operations; it is possible, in one word, that nature acts as last principle through diverse immediate principles of operations, like an energy generator is able to carry out qualitatively different jobs by means of the corresponding transformers. That is to say, there is, on the one hand,

the possibility of the existence of extranatural processes and, on the other hand, that of a diversity of natural processes.

Once we consider the possibility of this twofold distinction in a purely dialectical manner, we will attempt to find, in the first place, the multiple meanings of the adjective "natural." How and in how many ways can the adjective "natural" be attached to substances (to substantives)? In the second place, and intimately connected to what we have just stated, we try to establish a "Dialectics of the Natural" that allows us to classify the diverse processes that occur between beings with regard to the relation they hold with their own nature. Finally, we have to detect, although in an *exclusively formal* manner, the place that extranatural processes hold with regard to the natural.

### The Meanings of the Adjective "Natural"

In order to somewhat organize the multiple meanings that the adjective "natural" has received, we can choose between two paths. The first consists in following the diverse meanings we have found for the substantive "nature" (bearing in mind that we call "natural" that which is "according to nature") and deducing from each one of them the adjetival sense. Thus, we can call "natural" every process that occurs according to one of the given meanings of nature. In this sense, we speak of natural inclinations, natural characteristics, natural causes, and so on. We are not interested here in developing the twenty meanings we have found, as our aim—as we have already stated—is not to elaborate a Phenomenology of all Existing Natural.

Another reason also forces us to abandon this path, since we started calling "nature" precisely that which occurred in a natural manner. That is, in order to develop the concept of nature, we started off from the consideration of natural processes, analogously as the substantive idea of art emerged from the abstraction of the common characteristics of things made by human technique, in the classical sense of Greek *τέχνη*.<sup>1</sup> And in this way, we would define "nature" by what is "natural," and vice versa.

In truth, we usually call "natural processes" those that occur in a given manner, which corresponds to the implicit concept that we have of nature. But this first common and confusing idea already considers as natural processes those that happen in accordance with the most intimate tendency and way of *being* of each thing, those that emerge from the depths of a being without alien influences that may perturb it. This is why the classical Scholastic definition of nature as "intrinsic principle of operations" is simultaneously its phenomenological and essential definition. It expresses its criteria of knowability at the same time as its proper essence.

But this consideration allows us to find a second path to elucidate the characteristics of the diverse natural processes. We have to apply the classical definition. By applying it, however (and the chapter on the diverse meanings of "nature" is evidence of this), we would lose many so-called natural processes that have been consecrated by use, by virtue of partial conceptions that consider as first principle that which is not, or that voluntarily restrict the field of its affirmation. This forces us to reformulate the problem, not starting from a rigorous definition, but from the common base of the diverse meanings of "nature." The second path will consist, then, in an analogous reconsideration to that made with the concept of nature, taking advantage of the common characteristic of *principle* found in every meaning. For this, it will suffice to bear in mind that natural processes are those whose *principle* is nature.

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* II.1 (193a31).

Following, thus, not the diverse meanings of "nature," but rather the different meanings of "principle," we attain the same result. Consequently, we also find a general arrangement for all those extranatural processes that we are also interested in considering, since this is the only way that we can properly delimit the field of the Natural. Hence the title of the section that follows the next.

### Dialectics of the Natural

According to the indicated method, we must once again begin with the definition of "principle." But so as to include everything that is in some way related to nature, we must bear in mind that something may have nature as its *positive* principle, and then it will be called natural, or as its *negative* principle, and then it can be called extranatural. "Natural" will thus be that whose positive principle is nature, but principle is that from which something primarily *is, becomes, or is known*.

#### *Principle of Being*

In the first case, that is, in the consideration of nature as *principium rei*, we must distinguish between the principle itself and the thing of which it is principle, that is, that which is nature and that which has nature—or, in other words, the principle of motion and the thing moved. This distinction can already be found in Aristotle<sup>2</sup> and offers no difficulty whatsoever. It is obvious that the principle itself, that is, nature, can be called "natural."

Analogously, apart from nature as principle as such, a being can be called natural if it possesses this principle. Thus, those things that have, that possess, nature will be natural. *Having a nature* is the essential characteristic of a natural being. It is obvious that beings that *have* a nature must be substances, since only these may possess something (they are the only "substrates"). And precisely the first thing that substances "support" is nature, or, in other words, genre and species, since, as we have already seen, nature is the second substance. And thus God does not *have* a nature because He does not possess a second substance: He *is* His own nature. More specifically, among substances there are some that are persons because of the *way in which they possess* their nature, and therefore they are radically different from the rest.

The concept of a being that is natural because it has a nature is already in Aristotle, who not only speaks of a subject-nature,<sup>3</sup> that is, matter, but he also specifies that having a nature means having a *principle*-nature—a principle that only substances can possess, as only these are subjects, and nature is always in a subject.<sup>4</sup> However, this mode of being is peculiar, for it constitutes the form as well as the second substances are "sustained" by the first, and not a merely accidental being inherent.

Now, by developing the different principles of a thing, we will have the diverse concepts of nature—form, matter, and so on—that will allow us to find the corresponding meanings of the adjective "natural."

#### *Principle of Becoming*

The preceding simplicity becomes complexity when we come to the principle of becoming, and we must consider the changes and operations of natural substances. In fact, we must now

<sup>2</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (192b36).

<sup>3</sup> *Phys.* I.7 (191a8).

<sup>4</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (192b34).

investigate the number and characteristics of these principles which, by definition, will be the cause of as many other types of natural processes.

Clearly, there is no need to establish an entire metaphysics of becoming for this, developing all its principles, but merely of finding those characteristics by which any given process may be called natural by virtue of its reference to the principle from where it comes.

The principle of becoming can either be considered in an *ontological* sense or in a merely *temporal* sense. In the ontological sense, change in a being may either stem from an *intrinsic* principle or from an *extrinsic* one. The latter, as such, cannot originate any natural action, but it will be useful in characterizing the extranatural.

### *Passive Principle*

The intrinsic principle, in its turn, may be considered either as *active* or as merely *passive*.

The passive principle is all the intrinsic power of a being, corresponding to an extrinsic principle of action; so that the latter also acquires a certain relationship to nature. Now then, can we call natural any action in which nature only appears as passive principle? The answer to this question leads us to a new distinction within the same passive principle.

a. In fact, there is the possibility of a process that emerges from nature as a merely passive principle, in the sense that nature has acted with an intrinsic tendency or inclination, not to produce, but rather to receive from outside something that complements and completes it.<sup>5</sup> Because this tendency is a natural inclination, this case may be considered as coming from a passive *natural principle*.

b. However, there is also the possibility of an even greater passivity, in which nature only possesses the ability of reception in face of the extrinsic principle that acts upon it without showing any inclination toward this extrinsic principle, even if this principle truly perfects it. We then have a passive *obediential principle*, an issue whose difficulties transcend the topic of nature.

At first glance, it seems that, if there are some things that are "by nature" and others that are not, the former owe their *being* to nature, while the latter owe their being to other causes.<sup>6</sup> But this is not the case here, as can be drawn by what we have said about nature as passive principle. According to Aristotle, the things of the first type do not owe their *being*, but rather their motion, to nature, and those of the second type owe this motion to other causes (technique, chance, choice) that, because they are extrinsic principles of motion (*αρχαι εν αλλω*),<sup>7</sup> cannot be called natural.

### *Processes by and According to Nature*

Returning now to the consideration of the active principle, we see that it is a positive principle of action, ontological, intrinsic, and active.

In the Aristotelian texts with examples of the natural processes derived from the consideration of the *principium rei*, we can also see a third case of natural action that is different from the two we have already mentioned (*φυσις* and *εχει φυσιν*)—a case that Aristotle indistinctly names *φυσει* or *κατα φυσιν*. Even if he seems to differentiate between both terms on some

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.6, a.5, ad 2.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Phys.* II.1 (192b8).

<sup>7</sup> See *Met.* XII, a (1070a7), among many other places.

occasions,<sup>8</sup> strictly speaking he uses them as synonyms. This gives us a good starting point to consider these type of processes in greater detail.

Processes that occur "in accordance to" nature—this is how these third processes may be called—could then be distinguished, by using the aforementioned Aristotelian terminology, into processes that occur *by nature* ( $\phiύσι$ ) and processes that happen *according to nature* ( $\kατά φύσιν$ ). Simplicius already does so in his commentary,<sup>9</sup> according to which everything produced by nature is  $\phiύσει$ , but only that which happens in accordance with nature's plan, that is, in the same way as nature acts, is  $\kατά φύσιν$ . Strictly speaking, Simplicius's distinction can also be found in Aristotle, although with a different terminology:  $\kατά φύσιν$  and  $\παρά φύσιν$ .<sup>10</sup>

But perhaps, even clearer than following Simplicius is to develop what Aristotle<sup>11</sup> said—explaining his implicit distinction and trying to go deeper into the distinction we have sketched out—considering generically all changes that emerge from nature as from its active principle as processes "in accordance to" nature, and then dividing them as they occur *by nature* or *according to nature*. In his way, the same terminology would be interpreted in the following manner: processes that emerge *directly* from nature as if from its *active* positive principle, that is, that are *caused* by nature, will be processes *by nature*. These will be spontaneous processes, and they will necessarily occur, since all things act toward an end—an end that, in natural things, has its principle in nature. In this sense, we can call natural beings those that have been directly produced by nature in a process like, for example, generation. Thence, animals, plants, and their integral parts are natural; but so are simple bodies<sup>12</sup> insofar as they, by nature, produce the rest; and composed bodies, insofar as they are directly produced by the elements.

But we also know that not all processes commonly called "natural" act according to an intrinsic need to act in such a way, but rather they can act under an "accord" of mere convenience, that is, *according to nature*, insofar as it is consistent with such an action.

Now then, both processes under question, as well as their conformity with nature, must have a cause. There are two possible hypotheses about the cause of these processes: either nature is their cause in a very remote way, leaving some gaps in the chain of causality, or nature is partially a cause of them. But both solutions are fundamentally reduced to one since the gaps in causality (first hypothesis) will have to be filled with some other causes, which may supplement what nature has left indeterminate; that is, we have the second hypothesis, which considers nature as a partial cause of change next to other causes, to other extrinsic principles of action.<sup>13</sup>

As the interest of this chapter is eminently dialectic and classificatory, it is not necessary to determine what these extrinsic principles may be, or the type of processes that allow for this plurality of causes. One example will suffice: will tends toward goodness *by nature* (*a natura*), and it is *according to nature* (*secundum naturam*) that it tends toward *this* goodness that is adequate for it. The first natural movement is necessary; the second one is not. The complete cause of the first one is nature, while the second one needs the extrinsic principle of our previous knowledge, and so on. In this sense, love is the first manifestation *a natura*; and it is along these lines that we must understand the ethical norm of living *secundum naturam*.

<sup>8</sup> For example, in *Phys.* II.1 (193a1).

<sup>9</sup> *Comm. in Phys.* 271.10–12.

<sup>10</sup> See *Phys.* V.6 (230a18, b21).

<sup>11</sup> *Phys.* II.1 (192b35ff.).

<sup>12</sup> See *Phys.* II.1 (192b8).

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.2, a.1.

Nature, thus, as the active principle of *fieri* (becoming), will originate natural things. As a single and complete principle, it will produce processes *by nature*, completely *caused by nature*; and as a partial principle, it will lead to processes *according to nature*.

Nevertheless, a great difficulty emerges in this last case regarding natural processes *secundum naturam*, as these are either produced by other causes that are not nature (art, for example<sup>14</sup>), or else the concept of nature itself collapses since we have a nature that is incapable of fulfilling its end, that is, there appears an inexplicable dys-teleological realm. Now then, there are many processes *secundum naturam* that are not due to any other cause but nature and, on the other hand, are not *a natura* since they do not achieve their desired end.

This problem is solved by recalling the relationship between nature and substance that we presented earlier. According to this, something will be natural for a thing if it is fitting for its substance, that is, that which is in the thing *per se*;<sup>15</sup> but, properly speaking, nature is the second substance, so something is called properly natural if it is adequate for the genre or the species of the thing, and less properly natural if it is adequate for the individual.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, we can speak of natural operation insofar as it emerges from a part of the substance or, better yet, from a part of nature (or perhaps from a nature that is an integral part of a being; but this problem is of no concern to us now). In this sense, we can say that Man's natural operations are those that emerge from nature as genre (his animality) or as species (his rationality).<sup>17</sup> And with this we explain, moreover, that since there is a plurality of principles of operation, there must be an order among them. Such an order is only possible by means of a hierarchy of principles and, in rational creatures, it implies the freedom that intellectual natures enjoy—a freedom that clarifies why the motive force of activity (the nature) of beings endowed with appetition and apprehension is different from that in those that do not possess these faculties.<sup>18</sup> This is why operations *according to nature* are only found in living beings. Inanimate beings always act *by nature*; their end is, individually and unequivocally, determined. If there is a plurality of principles in these, their hierarchical structuring is established by means of the subsumption of the inferior ones to the superior ones. This is the ultimate reason why material nature is always determined *ad unum*.

Obviously, both processes allow a series of subdivisions that belong to the study of the various sciences that study the distinct behavior of the different beings in the universe. So, material processes *by nature* do not exclude a certain indeterminism that comes from their contingency. That hydrochloric acid decomposes marble, that the sun rises in the morning, that this flower turns into fruit, that the bird falls from the nest, and so on are all events *by nature*, and nevertheless very different in character from each other. But this is not the place to study them in depth.

#### *Natural and "Elicit" Appetite*

Until now, we have deliberately avoided Scholastic terminology with regard to the appetite in general, which, all things considered, is nothing but nature itself, as we have

<sup>14</sup> In *Met. XII.3* (1070a4) Aristotle says that every substance comes from another of the same class, either by art, or by nature, or by chance, or spontaneously. These would be the four causes that influence the processes of becoming.

<sup>15</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.10, a.1.

<sup>16</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.51, a.1, and he says the same thing in I-II, q.63, a.1.

<sup>17</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.31, a.7.

<sup>18</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.41, a.3.

repeatedly stated. This terminology is based on how a being's tendency may change whether its inclination is independent of knowledge (*appetitus naturalis*) or it follows knowledge (*appetitus elicitus*).<sup>19</sup> We have not dismissed it in order to follow the primitive Aristotelian terminology, but rather to avoid the numerous discussions that have originated—based on this division—about Man's natural appetite for supernatural happiness, and because we wanted to deduce this division as a consequence of a general approach to the problem, independently of the issue of natural appetite.

In fact, the being endowed with knowledge is the only one that possesses a principle of immateriality thanks to which the alluded subsumption of principles does not occur according to a merely material paradigm, without freedom of any kind. So, the principle of action of the knowing being is, simultaneously, the function of another principle, that is, that of previous knowledge. It is the determinability to an *unum* as a function, in its turn, of another principle. It is understandable, thus, that there is an intimate relationship between this terminology and the one we have adopted up to this point, although they are not exactly the same.

In fact, innate appetite will always be *by nature*, since it leaves no gaps of causality to be filled. And elicit appetite will basically be the same as the process *according to nature*, whenever knowledge is not so exhaustive so as to cause the tendency or appetition of that being in a complete manner. That is to say, the inclination of the blessed soul toward God, even though it is elicit, is *a natura* and not *secundum naturam*.

Bearing these differences in mind, we can call *innate* or simply *natural* the act *by nature*; and *elicit* or simply *connatural* the act *according to nature*, since the latter either must have other causes adjacent to nature (other natures, for example) which end up determining it, or it must emerge with a radical indetermination that is only possible if the tendency *ad unum*, essential to all nature, is inclined toward an *unum* that, in its turn, is a variable function. And such is, without a doubt, the case of intellectual nature, with an indefectible tendency toward its own perfection, its own good; but whose good must be individually known by reason in order for the will to accomplish a concretely determined act. This is why the main examples of *connatural* acts, that is, those according to nature, are elicit acts, that is, acts requiring a previous knowledge of the end under the "species" of goodness.

#### *Temporal Principle*

One can also understand "principle," as we have said, in a temporal sense. Then, that which has been accompanying a being since its origin is what will be considered natural;<sup>20</sup> specifically—directly connected to its etymology—that which it possesses *from birth*.<sup>21</sup> This origin is susceptible to a twofold distinction: something can be possessed *since birth*, like blindness in a man blind from birth, or it can be possessed *by birth*, like original sin, even when it does not belong, properly speaking, to the intrinsic natural principle of the thing. It is the same distinction as before between *a natura* and *secundum naturam*, which is here called *a nativitate* and *secundum nativitatem*.

<sup>19</sup> This slightly disorienting distinction rests on the idea that *natura prior est quam intellectus, quia natura cuiuscumque rei est essentia eius* [Nature is prior to intellect since the nature of anything is its own essence] (*Sum. theol.*, I, q.60, a.1).

<sup>20</sup> See Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* dist. 18, a.1, q.2. See also dist. 36, a.3, q.1, n.3.

<sup>21</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, III, q.2, a.12.

### *Principle of Knowledge*

Finally we must consider the *principium cognitionis* as a source of new natural processes. Knowledge will be natural if it emerges from the nature of the premises as principles—premises that are not only the logical premises from which the conclusion is *naturally* deduced, but also the specific capacity of our mind itself. Thus, any knowledge that does not have human intellectual nature as *principium cognitionis* is not natural to Man. The importance of this point is understandable because, if it were possible to know if a truth transcends the principles of human knowledge, we would possess criteria to affirm the supernaturality of something.

### **The Extranatural**

The previous distinctions we have made are further specified if we consider them in reverse in those things on which nature acts as a mere *negative* principle. These things can be labeled *extranatural* and they can be divided in a purely dialectical manner into *transnatural*, if they are either above or below the normal, that is, if they are either infra- or supranatural; *antinatural* if they are contrary to natural inclination; and *a-natural* if they do not allow for a term of comparison to natural ones.

We must stress that the point of view under which we consider the extranatural is that of its relationship to nature, and that, therefore, we will do without a weightier investigation of the issues that point to the supernatural. For this very same reason we only present a very general discussion, and we do not descend to an anatomy of the extranatural in the different spheres of being.

### *The Antinatural*

*Anti-* or unnatural processes are those that act against some natural inclination. And once again, it is fitting to ask by virtue of what *other* force they might act against nature. In the multitude of beings that populate the universe, there are mutual actions and interferences even by virtue of the natural tendencies of each thing. The influence of one being over another may be in accordance to its nature or against it. In the latter case, we have an action *contra naturam*, explainable by the intervention of a higher cause. The classic example is that of a stone thrown up into the air by the hand of man.<sup>22</sup> In this case, the motion is antinatural for a double reason: because moving upwards is contrary to the stone's inclination, and because the movement comes from outside the stone.<sup>23</sup> However, the reason is one (even with a twofold aspect) because, if we were able to make it so that the action were intrinsic to the stone's being, the motion would turn, by definition, into natural; as, for example, we see in the rising motion of water during the tide, according to the medieval conception.<sup>24</sup>

This is also the case of God's action over things. And this is why God can never act *against* nature, since His will is precisely that which determines the nature of things.<sup>25</sup>

This is a fundamental point of the Christian vision of nature and, in fact, the Augustinian principle according to which Divine Will is the ultimate ground of any created nature<sup>26</sup> is completely preserved in Thomism too. This is the reason why St. Thomas repeats with

<sup>22</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.105, a.6, ad 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.6, a.1.

<sup>24</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I, q.105, a.6, ad 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Sum. theol.*, III, q.44, a.2, ad 1.

<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *De Civitatis Dei*, XXI.8.2.

such insistence that God does nothing *contra naturam*,<sup>27</sup> but rather, at most, only against its ordinary course.<sup>28</sup> And thus, what may seem like an act of God against nature<sup>29</sup> is always against an individual in particular, and never against the second substance as such.<sup>30</sup> This is possible because something may be opposed to the species of an individual, but be suitable for its genre.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, God can act apparently against nature by imprisoning, though without annihilating, the natural inclination of a being; but He can never act against the obediential potency.<sup>32</sup>

There is, thus, an initial class of processes *contra naturam* that come from a superior extrinsic cause that invades the tendency of the most imperfect nature to direct it toward a finality, in a certain way, contrary to its own.

### *The Disorderly*

There is, furthermore, a second way of acting antinaturally that inverts the possibilities as the previous order, and that consists in a perturbation of the superior natural order by virtue of a force that lies in inferior orders. This is nothing less than the problem of evil, especially of physical evil. It is, for example, the use of technology against the life of the spirit. Here also lies the possibility of temptation.

The most important general case of this second class of acts consists in that which the spiritual and the material orders relate; namely, when there is a transgression of spiritual values by material beings that do not subordinate to the hierarchical and harmonic universal order. This would be the case of a stone thrown—against the law of gravity—to hurt somebody for no reason.

These two types of antinatural actions are such by virtue of an extrinsic force that provokes them. The extrinsic action will, thus, be natural if it conforms to natural order, and antinatural if this conformity does not exist, whether it be because of the influx of a superior nature on an inferior one, or vice versa.

### *The Sinful*

But the most interesting case is that in which an antinatural action also comes from the most intimate part of the being itself, in such a way that it seems to be in open contradiction with the concept of nature we have presented. The distinction between what is natural *by* nature and what is natural *according to* nature is once again going to solve our problem. In fact, there is nothing that can be antinatural in the former sense (*a natura*), as this would represent the very destruction of the intrinsic principle of being itself, namely, a real change of nature. Thus, natural appetite for perfection in Man is indestructible. But something can

<sup>27</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, III, q.44, a.2, ad 1; *In I Sent.*, d.33, q.1, a.2, ad 1; *In IV Sententiarum*, d.46, q.1, ad 2; q.2, ad 3; *Contra Gentes*, III, 110; *De Potentia*, q.1, a.3, ad 1; q.4, a.1.20; q.5, a.2; q.6, a.2, ad 3; *De Coelo*, lect.4; *Hebr.* 2, lect.1; *De Anima*, a.21, ad 10; *Rom* 11, lect.3 (end).

<sup>28</sup> *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.104, a.4, ad 2; see also q.154, a.2.

<sup>29</sup> See *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.104, a.4, ad 2; III, q.44, a.2, ad 1; *In I Sent.*, d.42, q.2, a.2, ad 4; *In IV Sent.*, d.33, q.1, a.2, dist.46, q.1, a.2, q.2, ad 2; *Contra Gentes*, VIII, 100 (*sic!*); *De Veritate*, q.13, a.1, ad 2 and ad 3; *De Pot.*, q.1, a.3, ad 1; q.4, a.1, ad 20; q.5, a.2; q.5, a.4 (end); q.6, ad 5, ad 3; *De Anima*, a.21, ad 10; *De Coelo*, lect.4; *Rom* 11, lect.3 (end).

<sup>30</sup> *De Ver.*, q.13, a.1, ad 2 and ad 3; *De Pot.*, q.6, a.1, ad 1 and ad 3.

<sup>31</sup> *In Phys.* IV, lect.12 (end); V, lect.3 (middle); VII, lect.1 (middle); lect.2 (end); VIII, lect.5 (end).

<sup>32</sup> *De Pot.*, q.1, a.10, ad 1.

be opposed to the inclination *secundum naturam* by virtue of the connatural force of nature itself, which acts according to another one of its aspects (or according to another sub-nature situated in the being itself); that is, varying the *secundum*. Hence, sin is not against nature in the first sense, but it is so in the second,<sup>33</sup> and vices are antinatural<sup>34</sup> in this same respect, as they represent an inclination that disagrees with what is advisable for human nature as such, but it works by virtue of the animality in which Man anyway participates.<sup>35</sup> This is so at least in most vices and sins, for we are not now interested in discussing the "sin of the spirit." Analogously, the virtues to which vices are opposed are not natural *by nature*, but *according to it*.<sup>36</sup>

By virtue of this same distinction, Aristotle also solves the problem of anti-natural motion (*παρά φύσιν*) opposed to natural motion according to nature (*κατά φύσιν*). He asks himself why these distinctions are applied with no difficulty of comprehension whatsoever to local motion, but not to the rest of changes in the world. For example, the upward motion of a heavy body is considered antinatural, and we do not speak of an alteration that is consistent with nature, and another that is against it; as it is just as natural to get sick as it is to get well, and it is just as antinatural that something turns white as it is that it turns black.<sup>37</sup> Aristotle observes that local motion possesses a kind of polarity that allows such a distinction; and thus, to be able to include this polarity in the rest of movements, he defines the violent movement as opposed to the natural, and he calls anti-natural all violent changes, and natural all the ones that are not. That is to say, he interprets *secundum naturam* as *secundum modum naturae*, as there can be in nature no antinatural motion opposed to the natural *by nature*.

The problems introduced by the concept of miracle, which has been so useful to specify many concepts about the natural order of things, would have their place here, but we will merely indicate them. Analogously, the study of Fortune and Destiny belong here, especially pointing out their different meaning in the Scholastic sense and the Aristotelian one, insofar as the Philosopher did not know about Christian creation and providence.<sup>38</sup> *Nihil igitur casu fit in mundo.*<sup>39</sup>

### *The Transnatural*

The following group of extranatural processes is formed by those that have been called transnatural—which, in turn, can be divided into *infra-* or *supranatural*. But it is enough for us here to deal with transnatural processes in a generic manner with the exclusive goal of making their relationship to the concept of nature intelligible.

The concept of transnatural, as we understand it here, means that which, while being in the same line as the natural, either has not reached this limit, or it has trespassed it. This is why the concept of order is so important to elucidate these processes.

In fact, the concept of transnatural is relative, as it essentially refers to a relationship with the natural. We need, therefore, a point to which we can refer it to, and this is the natural; but we also need a unity vector with which to measure it, and this is the concept of order.

<sup>33</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.63, ad 1.

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, II.13.

<sup>35</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.71, a.1, c.

<sup>36</sup> *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q.71, a.2, ad 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Phys.* V.6 (230a18, b21).

<sup>38</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, V.1.

<sup>39</sup> "Nothing in this world happens by chance" (Augustine, *De Div. Quaest.*, 83).

Something will then be transnatural only with regard to a determined nature, and its transnaturality will be measured by its setting in the natural order of the cosmos. According to this setting, we may be able to speak of superior and inferior natures, which will be supra- or infranatural with regard to the nature under consideration.

What we are interested in here, though, is transnatural *processes*, that is, those operations that a being carries out that do not appear to come from *its own* operative principle, but rather from a superior or an inferior one. As a consequence of the ideas we developed earlier, when studying some of the relationships of the concept of nature, the notion of cosmic order emerges as something more than just a pure name, but as a unitary and real order maintained by the appetition of all beings toward their perfection and, ultimately, toward God. Well, there is room, in this order, for influences—even intrinsic—of some beings over others; furthermore, for the attainment of ultimate perfection, some beings need others, in such a way that the more perfect ones influence the inferior ones in order to harmonize the last—and new—Chant of Creation.

The manifestation of this influence shapes the transnatural processes by means of which an inferior nature fulfills the actions of a superior one because it is influenced by the latter<sup>40</sup>—since, by definition, a nature cannot achieve an end that is superior to its forces, and we can know perfectly well if an end is disproportionate to a specific being.<sup>41</sup> This influence of some beings over others is one of the greatest philosophical problems, and it encompasses everything from the issue of the activity and transmutation of chemical bodies to the communication of substances, including the problems of freedom, divine motion, and so on. It is understandable that one isolated problem cannot be solved disregarding others, and we can now see, as we said, that the real issues of philosophy must be tackled from within a system, because only systems possess a vision of the whole that allow us to examine the complexity of Reality.

One thing remains as the starting point for an investigation about the supernatural, namely, that which exceeds the limits of one nature cannot be produced by the same if it is not by the action of another superior nature—according to the very definition of nature.<sup>42</sup> With this, however, we do not still have the criteria to know the limits of a nature, since, even if we know a nature by its operations, it seems that we can never say that the operations of a being exceed nature, as the latter has been posited specifically to explain them. But these are already transnatural problems....

The *a-natural* holds no interest whatsoever for us. Since it is that which has no relationship to the natural, it can only be the way to consider things disregarding their relationship to nature.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentes*, III.147.

<sup>41</sup> *Contra Gentes*, III.52.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*



## SECTION VII

### PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION

#### The Text, the Context, and the Texture\*

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#### 1

#### THE TEXT

##### **Revolution**

The meaning of "revolution" in a dictionary is a very broad one: from its mathematical, astronomical, and physical use to a merely metaphorical and spiritual sense. All have in common an underlying spatial metaphor: putting upside-down a set of given entities. We detect, then, from the very beginning a certain preeminence given to the experience of *space*.

We will restrict ourselves, however, to the most common use of the term today, in the sociological field.<sup>1</sup> Here, significantly enough, the accent falls on the *temporal factor*.

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\* "Philosophy and Revolution: The Text, the Context, and the Texture," *Philosophy East and West* XXIII, no. 3 (1973): 315-22.

<sup>1</sup> Contemporary literature on the subject is overwhelming. The footnotes throughout this article are intended as a cursory and elementary bibliographical survey. L. Mendieta y Nuñez, *Teoría de la Revolución* (Mexico City: Biblioteca de Ensayos Sociológicos, Universidad Nacional, 1958), 10 and *passim*; C. Brinkmann, *Soziologische Theorie der Revolution* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948); Chalmers A. Johnson, *Revolution and the Social System* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University, 1964); Chalmers A. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966); B. Mazlisch, Arthur D. Laöedin, and David B. Ralston (eds.),

The various written and oral "texts" about revolution, especially modern ones, set the issue under the heading of liberation<sup>2</sup>—a highly religious and theological term.<sup>3</sup> The aim of revolution is the liberation of Man. The two terms, however, are not synonymous. Two important restrictions have to be noted: (a) the *contents* and (b) the *form* of a revolutionary liberation are specific and peculiar.

Whereas religions have to do with the liberation of Man—and we could even define religion as a way to liberation or salvation—revolutions only aim at a particular type of liberation. We may understand liberation or salvation as referring to the fullness or end of Man in whatever sense it may be interpreted. This is the reason why revolution and religion are so closely related: they can meet or clash with one another, but they both deal with the same central human problem, the liberation of Man. Revolution, then, is a theological problem.<sup>4</sup>

a. Revolutionary movements understand the *contents* of liberation in a more specific or restricted way than most traditional religions. Revolutions want to liberate Man from oppressive temporal or historical structures, and this, further, neither by denying nor transcending them (like spiritualistic movements), nor by reforming them (like rebellion of all sorts), but by radically changing or overthrowing them.<sup>5</sup> It would be a *metabasis eis allo genos*, an unwarranted extrapolation to include—under the term "revolution"—spiritual paths claiming to liberate Man by denying the reality of historical structures or by escaping into an ahistorical realm or mode of existence. They may be the answer to the revolutionary challenge, in case, but they are not revolutions in the proper sense of the word.<sup>6</sup>

b. The specific revolutionary *form* is also peculiar: it is the form of bringing about the radical change by speeding up time, by modifying the "natural" rhythms, by doing a kind of temporal violence to the temporal development of things, by carrying out the revolution by means of a man-made or artificial span of time. Revolution is more than evolution.

These considerations lead us to understand revolution as a process tending to liberate Man from historical structures that are felt oppressive, by overthrowing those very structures in a man-guided span of time.<sup>7</sup>

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*Revolution: A Reader* (New York: Macmillan, 1971); M. A. Kaplan (ed.), *The Revolution in the World Politics* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962).

<sup>2</sup> See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, 3rd ed. (New York: Viking Press, 1966), *passim*. And, quoting Antoine C. Condorcet, "The word *revolutionary* can be applied only to revolutions whose aim is freedom," in "Sur le sens du mot *révolutionnaire*," *Oeuvres* 12 (1847–1849): 21 (Paris).

<sup>3</sup> See the contemporary trends of Latin American theology: for instance, the magazine *Cristianismo y Sociedad* of Montevideo, in most of its recent issues, and also J. Pablo, *Mística, desarrollo y revolución* (Montevideo: Mundo Nuevo, 1969); J. Petras and M. Zeitlin (eds.), *Latin American Reform or Revolution* (New York: Fawcett, 1968); and the many writings by G. Gutierrez Merino and J. Miguez Bonino. See also the 159 biographical items compiled by V. Fidel Gonzales, *Revolución en América Latina* (Cuernevaca, 1968).

<sup>4</sup> "El revolucionario, en cambio, no se rebela contra los abusos, sino contra los usos" [The revolutionary, on the other hand, does not rebel against abuses, but against uses] (J. Ortega y Gasset, *El tema de nuestro tiempo* [Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, 1939], 102).

<sup>5</sup> "The ends which Buddhism seeks to realize are outside any social or historical contexts," R. Puligandla and K. Puhakka, "Buddhism and Revolution," *Philosophy East and West* 20, no. 4 (October 1970): 354, where we hardly have to do with a theory of revolution, but rather with a worldview that makes modern Western revolutions meaningless.

<sup>6</sup> See G. F. Lucini, "Teología della rivoluzione," in *Contributi dell'Istituto di Filosofia* (Series 3, Philosophy, 15) (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1972), 2:195–221.

<sup>7</sup> Contemporary studies are more precise in applying the term "revolution" than a few decades

We may immediately detect a common assumption, basic to all revolutions: the centrality of time and history, and their real grip on the human being. Without this assumption, any talk about revolution is idle.<sup>8</sup>

### Philosophy

We can discover four different *kairological* moments in the self-understanding of the philosophical enterprise.<sup>9</sup> I call them "kairological" moments because they are somehow temporal without being merely chronological.

1. The most ancient conception of the supreme wisdom, which only later began to be called *sophia* or more discretely "philosophy," was nothing but the intellectual aspect of religion, the reflective awareness on the nature of religion, the conscious effort at understanding the truth (orthodoxy) of the existential religious path (orthopraxis). What people do when handling their human situation, that is what philosophy reflects on. Philosophy is here the intellectual side of religion. No wonder that philosophy and religion were bound together either in collaboration (apologetics, philosophy as the *ancilla* [servant] of theology, etc.) or in fight (philosophy substituting religion, Enlightenment, "human adulthood," etc.). During this first period, philosophy was inextricably tied to the whole religious pilgrimage of Man.<sup>10</sup> It was more than symbiosis; it was one single life.

2. Reason, being the main instrument of philosophy, soon fought for its independence from religion. Its main strength was its claim to be free from human credulity and superstition, and thus, to be the science of truth. Philosophy had to pay a heavy price for its independence. It had to renounce the temporal realm of fleeting events; it had to abandon what Aristotle would call the singular, Thomas Aquinas the mere accidental contingencies, and Leibniz the *vérités de fait*; and to concentrate on the nontemporal realm of unchanging, general, and necessary ideas. Philosophy bought its independence from religion by abandoning the temporal world. Scholasticism of all types provides adequate examples. History as the realm of contingency and individual action was outside the scope of philosophy.

3. Philosophy recovered its lost link with temporality in two stages. The first stage was the "critical revolution" of which Kant could be considered the main exponent: philosophy became aware of its own assumptions and discovered that, before being able to say anything about the world, the "thing in itself" reality and the like, it had to examine its own laws, structures, and assumptions. The alleged atemporality of ideas was thus tempered by the discovery of the temporal structure of the thinking mind.

This incursion of temporality into the human mind became more apparent and pressing in the second stage of this same period, after the collapse of the Hegelian system. It took the form of philosophical historicism, and Marxist and post-Marxist philosophies. Not only time and thought, but also time and Being were considered indissolubly connected: the temporal

ago. See, for example, the difference from "revolt" in J. Ellul, *Autopsie de la Révolution* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1969), 129.

<sup>8</sup> Only with an introductory chapter on "A Role for History" can Thomas S. Kuhn write on *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

<sup>9</sup> See my "Die Philosophie in der geistigen Situation der Zeit," *Akten des XIV. Internationalen Kongresses für Philosophie* (Herder, 1968), 4:75–87.

<sup>10</sup> See my chapter "Necesidad da una nueva orientación de la filosofía india," in *Misterio y Revolución* (Madrid: Marova, 1971), for further elaboration.

factor ceased to be seen as accidental to human thinking, or even to reality itself. We come thus to a fourth period: a secular one.

4. Once the historical dimension is regained to philosophy, the latter either becomes a religion in itself or it reconciles itself with traditional religions. We have then either the ideologies performing the role of ancient religions, or an encounter and embrace of traditional religion with philosophy.

We will eventually be able to formulate our hypothesis on "philosophy and revolution" from the perspective of comparative philosophy.

## 2

## THE CONTEXT

**Philosophy of Revolution**

So long as philosophy was considered outside the temporal flux, and dealing mainly with eternal and everlasting, or at least necessary truths, philosophy had little to do with revolution. It could only deal with moral issues, for example: whether or not it is ethically correct to kill a tyrant, to use violence, to use certain means for some types of ends, and so on. The context of philosophy was the atemporal realm, and revolution was considered to lie outside the competence of philosophical speculation.

Philosophy, thus, could be considered by revolutionary movements only as a reactionary and counterrevolutionary force, for such an atemporal activity could only be in favor of the status quo. It could, at best, try to understand change, once this had already occurred and been successful, but never bring it forth.<sup>1</sup>

Only when philosophy became more and more entangled in the temporal process itself could it contribute to productive or counterproductive revolutions.

**The Revolution of Philosophy**

Only in the first period, in the second half of the third period, and in the fourth period of philosophical evolution can philosophy be said to have an intrinsic link with revolution. In the first period, philosophy reflects the same changes of the complex religious setup of which it forms a part—with the subsequent danger of transgressing its limits and becoming an instrument in the hands of all sorts of totalitarianism.

In the fourth period, bringing the third to completion, the relationship between philosophy and revolution begins to dawn as an *ontonomic* or constitutive relation.<sup>2</sup> Here philosophy is no longer outside the human struggle, looking down upon the temporal events of Man's life on Earth; it does not simply pass moral judgments as to how things ought to develop, but it is involved in the same temporal melting pot of human consciousness and historical development. One could speak of an internal revolution in the philosophical field itself, of which not even linguistic analysis could be an exception, for languages themselves are intrinsically connected with time and history.

This brings us to the point of formulating a kind of law regarding the revolutionary stage of humankind from the standpoint of comparative philosophy, which is here submitted as a working hypothesis.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the many institutions and projects dedicated to religion and social change nowadays.

<sup>2</sup> For the concept of *ontonomy*, against heteronomy and autonomy, see my "Le concept d'ontonomie," in *Actes du XIe Congrès International de Philosophie* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1953), 3:182–88.

## 3

## THE TEXTURE

## Revolution as a Philosophical Theory

We could formulate this law in the following terms: not only has every revolution its philosophy, but no revolution is possible without an underlying philosophy, so that, if the latter is lacking, no revolution can even take place—if the intellectual structures and substructures cannot be articulated in the underlying philosophy of the peoples concerned. In other words, the philosophical ground of the aims and means of a revolution belongs to the revolution itself. Revolution is, in itself, a philosophical problem. It is, first of all, a philosophical endeavor, and not only a fact, or the concept of a fact to be philosophically evaluated later. Revolutions take place in the mind first—although not in every mind.<sup>1</sup> It is not a bare fact (provided that bare facts are possible) but a cosmo-anthropological complex, that is meaningful, and thus real, within a particular context.

We are living today in a special "texture" that makes the contexts of the different philosophical texts somewhat obsolete. On the one hand, philosophies and ideologies have subjects and citizens according to geographical and historical "provinces," that is, there are different philosophical texts that are only valid against the background of their respective contexts. On the other hand, there is a wind of universality, which has not yet found an accepted formulation, but is blowing in mythical and still timid forms. There is a subtle texture that begins to encompass the different contexts of the several worldviews.

It is this texture that offers the only possible background for a comparative philosophy. Philosophies are not simply different readings or different texts about the mystery of reality (just to use this expression), but different contexts, which can only be understood against the background of a common texture that challenges any verbalization. Now, revolution does not belong to the universal texture but only to the context of very few philosophies, and it is part and parcel of one philosophical text, which now strives to become more universal. What once was done under the name of God, of Church, or Civilization, now tries to be brought about under the flag of Revolution (be it technological or social).

We may try to clarify this complex situation by giving an example.

The inadequacy, felt today by certain groups in India, between their understanding of social justice and the historical situation they see, leads them to the conviction that a revolution like those in the West or in China is just and needed. They have come to this conviction because, having been exposed to a way of thinking alien to the traditional Indic one—with

<sup>1</sup> As far back as 1921, Ortega y Gasset said, "La revolución no es la barricada, sino un estado de espíritu. Este estado de espíritu no se produce en cualquier tiempo" [The revolution is not the barricade, but a state of mind. This state of mind does not occur at any time] (*El tema de nuestro tiempo*, op. cit., 101).

which even the word "revolution" has to be almost artificially built—they now consider unbearable their own social situation.<sup>2</sup>

The difficulty they are facing lies in the fact that there are no philosophical tools in the traditional thought of India to handle such a revolution, and most people in India, nurtured in the ancient culture, would not even understand what it all is about.<sup>3</sup>

Any "a-temporal" philosophy, any monistic and pantheistic worldview, any ahistorical culture, and so on, will not be able to understand and try to carry out the necessary philosophical and psychological preparation for a "needed" revolution. To superimpose an alien trend of thought will add confusion, but will not directly lead to a revolution.<sup>4</sup> It may, rather, lead to a mere reactionary resistance or sheer rebellion. Revolution is neither a universal value nor a universal human fact. It is at home within a particular philosophy, and tends to become a myth outside its proper context. This leads us to our final point.

### The Idiosyncrasy of Revolution

The morphological character of any colonial or neocolonial attitude is the ideal of cultural *monophormism*, be this in the form of one religion, one Church, one king or kingdom, one technological age or one world culture, or even one revolution. And yet, this does not justify the opposite extreme of a disconnected plurality: pluralism does not mean chaotic confusion.

If a true revolution has to take place in India—to continue with our example—an underlying philosophy is needed, which may give due importance to space and time and to the historical dimension of Man, and let the paradigmatic idea have an influence on the external fact.<sup>5</sup> Now, it is the task of philosophy and the incumbency of comparative philosophy to bring forth an understanding of time and history congenial and homogeneous with the

<sup>2</sup> The following Sanskrit words can convey the meaning of a revolution, but not all refer to a political one: *parivartana*: making something turn around, revolving, end of a period of time (cyclic conception); *parivrtti*: turning, rolling, end, termination; *avartana*: circular motion, stirring; *avrtti*: turning back, reversion, retreat; *avarta*: turning round; *vivarta*: modification, transformation (and significantly enough, it has the *Vedantic* meaning of illusion); *vivartana*: turn, change, causing to turn or to change, overturning; *paravrtti*: turning-back change, exchange. All the terms refer, first of all, to a circular conception of cosmos and history (most of these "revolutions" concern the movements of planets, etc.). They have hardly been used in the sense of a political revolution or total change of society. For the latter, the following, rather artificial, terms have been created (maybe only by Monier Williams): *rajyaparivartana*, *rājyārūtiparivartana*, all meaning more or less the same, i.e., a change in government. The most appropriate word for revolution would be *kranti*, which is used in Hindi in the modern political context. The root is *kram*, to step, to go. *Kranti* originally means going, proceeding, step, overcoming, surpassing. Whereas *karmāṇ* means the regular process, succession, order, etc., *kranti* is the intensified form.

<sup>3</sup> The modern anglo-Indian expression, "What to do?" is a direct translation from the Hindi *kya kare*; exasperating as it is felt by so many Westerners (who do not "get things done"), may serve as a popular example of our case in study. What is the fruit of so much effort to change structures that are ultimately irrelevant?

<sup>4</sup> This is what the so-called Naxalites are attempting, perhaps unconsciously, in India today: to create a sufficiently profound mental and spiritual shock by material upheaval and violence. "Social justice" is not their direct aim, but the necessary change of mind (*metanoia*), by sheer external violence.

<sup>5</sup> One could stretch the meaning of a sentence by S. Jankelevitch, *Révolution et Tradition* (Paris: J. B. Janin, 1947), 13: "Au point de départ de toute action révolutionnaire il y a ce qu'on peut appeler le *mythe des origines*" [At the starting point of any revolutionary action there is what we could call the *myth of origins*].

tradition of the peoples in question.<sup>6</sup> A superimposition of ready-made conceptions of time and history, as foreign bodies into an alien culture, will not succeed in creating the necessary understanding, or the tools needed for a constructive revolution. In order to put something upside down, you must first have a certain spatial orientation of the transformation you are to bring about. The Indian Revolution will have to be endogenous; moreover, the conception of time, space, and history necessary to articulate and carry out such a revolution has to correspond to the experience of the temporal reality as lived by the peoples of India. It will be the task of philosophy to develop such a conception. The very concept, and also the techniques of revolution, will change accordingly.<sup>7</sup> The Indian Revolution cannot originate, as it happened with most modern revolutions in the West, out of an impatience toward the *parousia*. It will have to strike another root.

By the same token, such an enterprise would demythologize time and history, and get rid of its monopoly by the modern Western world. Such a task has still to be performed. Here philosophy regains its existential, practical, and even political character, its risk, and also its beauty and life. It may well be the task of comparative philosophy to contribute, to discover, to weave, to create, or however we would like to articulate it, a common human texture—which will neither eliminate the variegated texts of human reason, nor destroy the various contexts of human experience, but present to the world at large the polychromatic harmony of human texture.

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<sup>6</sup> See my "The Law of *Karma* and the Historical Dimension of Man," *Philosophy East and West* 22, no. 1 (January 1972): 25–43. In Vol. IX, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>7</sup> "From the Christian standpoint, there is no absolute criterion of liberation within history" (P. Albrecht, "The Revolution beyond Revolutions," *Anticipation* 9 [October 1971]: 39).

## SECTION VIII

### SINGULARITY AND INDIVIDUALITY

#### The Double Principle of Individuation\*

\* \* \*

### INTRODUCTION

During its long history, the principle of individuation has always enjoyed a certain preeminence in the Western tradition. It even recurs in the hoary Platonic problem of the *τὸν καὶ τὸν πολλὰ*, the One and the many. It is another form of the question of universals, and it lurks in the central philosophical query about identity and difference. It touches the ancient and modern issue of the reality and knowability of things in their individuality. It thus connects with the contemporary inquiry on the epistemic and ontological status of history. It is equally implied in philosophical speculation about number, about mathematical and physical quantification.<sup>1</sup> In other words, we here deal with a central—although not exclusively—Western philosophical problem.<sup>2</sup> It was fundamental for Aristotle, who took the

\* Original text in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 19, no. 111–12 (1975): 141–66 (Bruxelles).

<sup>1</sup> Any history of ideas, history of philosophy, encyclopedia, or dictionary will give ample reference to these six important problems of Western philosophy.

<sup>2</sup> For a different tradition, see, e.g., P. Horsch, "Le principe d'individuation dans la philosophie indienne," *Asiatische Studien* 10 (1956): 29–104, 119–142, and the thirty-three contributions of the fourth East-West Philosophers' Conference at the University of Hawaii, 1964, edited by Ch. Moore and A. W. Morris, *The Status of the Individual in East and West* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968). Significantly enough, except for John E. Smith's contribution, "The Individual and the Judeo-Christian Tradition" (251–67) and a couple of other references, the six hundred pages of the work do not touch our problem.

proper reality of "individual" substances more "realistically" than Plato and had thus to figure out what makes each substance just what it is, and not another one (especially of the same species).<sup>3</sup> From then on, the issue of individuation was taken up by Christian Scholastics<sup>4</sup> via Islamic Scholasticism.<sup>5</sup>

### Purpose

Our intention here is not to study this great,<sup>6</sup> famous,<sup>7</sup> solemn,<sup>8</sup> highly involved,<sup>9</sup> and most thorny<sup>10</sup> question, but to tackle only a single aspect of it which may be relevant to the need of a contemporary anthropology in order to stress the distinction between individual and person, and to overcome the dominating model of natural science as the only possible paradigm for philosophical pursuit.<sup>11</sup>

This aspect is the anthropological facet of the question, so that, in point of fact, my thesis is that it is necessary to distinguish a double principle of individuation in order to do justice to the "things" this principle refers to. By using a certain terminology, I may venture to say that the *principle of individuality*—as defined below—is an (ontological) "*existenzial*" (of human existence).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that Platonism is "a doctrine which denies the reality of particulars individuals," as is well shown by D. S. Mackay, "The Problem of Individuality in Plato's Dialectic," in *The Problem of the Individual*, University of California Publications in Philosophy 20 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937), 131–54. The entire volume is relevant for our purpose.

<sup>4</sup> See J. Assenmacher, *Die Geschichte des Individuationsprinzip in der Scholastik* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1926; doctoral dissertation, Köln, 1925).

<sup>5</sup> It seems to have been Avicenna who first relied on Aristotle to formulate the principle of individuation based on matter. See also αριθμός [εστίν εν] ὡν η ἀληματικός, "in number [are one] those whose matter is one," *Metaphysics* V.6 (1016b32). See also the sober statement in *Met.*, XII.8 (1074a33) speaking about the unity of heaven (and thus of the prime mover): "All things that are many in number have matter." See Albert the Great, *In Met.* 3.10, who introduced Avicenna, and from whom Thomas took the *materia* (matter) as principle of individuation, but *signata quantitate*. See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *In Boethium De Trinitate*, q.4, a.2, ad 4; *Summa theol.*, I, q.3, a.3, etc. For some new material since P. Mandonnet's classical work *Siger de Brabant et l'Averroisme Latin au XIII siècle*, 2nd ed. (Louvain, 1908), see B. Geyer, "Albertus Magnus und der Averroismus nach dem Opusculum de XV problematibus," in J. Tenzler, *Urbild und Abglanz. Festgabe Herbert Doms* (Regensburg: J. Habbel, 1972), 185–92.

<sup>6</sup> *Magna quaestio*: so Augustine in his *Epistula XIV.4*.

<sup>7</sup> "Quaestio celeberrima," "vexata," "problema famosum infinitis disputationibus": Bonaventure, *II Sent.* d.3, schol. (quoted by Assenmacher, op. cit.).

<sup>8</sup> "Quaestio solemnis": Dietrich of Freiberg, *De intell. et intell.* XXV (in Assenmacher, op. cit.).

<sup>9</sup> "Implicatissima": so Suarez in his *Diputaciones metaphysicae* (in Ferrater-Mora, *Diccionario de Filosofía*, 5th ed. [Buenos Aires: Editorial Suramerica, 1971], s.v. "Individuación"). See especially *Liber X* and *Disputatio V*, *De unitate individuali eiusque principio*, but *Disp.* IV and VI also deal with the problem of unity.

<sup>10</sup> "Spinossissima": so Leibniz in his *Confessio philosophi* (in Ferrater-Mora, op. cit.).

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that the Scholastics said, "In hac re quot capita tot sensus" (on this issue, opinions are as numerous as the authors themselves) and modern authors speak of "einer nahezu unübersehbaren Fülle von Literatur . . . , ohne dass bis heute Einheitlichkeit darüber bestünde" (K. Lorenz: "Almost countless literature, without any consent to this day"). In one form or another, it is an ever-recurrent problem to the human mind.

<sup>12</sup> The terms "ontological" and "human existence" are both here mere redundancies, if we accept the Heideggerian nomenclature of *existenzial* as "Seinscharakter des Daseins" [the side of Being in our

For a long time, Man has proudly been stating that he is not a simple thing among other things in the universe, nor a mere spectator assisting passively at the unfolding of the cosmic order, but that he is, if not cosmologically the center of the universe, certainly a *sui generis* existence, irreducible to any other entity. Yet the way in which Man has been "individualized" has been, by and large, not much different from the ways other entities have—and the consequences of treating human beings as cattle for body-counting, or as "bits" in a computer, lie close at hand.<sup>13</sup> Our investigation just deals with the problem of rescuing the *identity* of the human being from his *identification* as thing.

It may also hopefully show how cross-cultural studies can be fruitful in approaching intra-cultural problems.<sup>14</sup> In fact, what will be said about the different emphases in the application of the logical principles of noncontradiction and identity as patterns of intelligibility is the result of a cross-cultural hermeneutic that here sheds light on a specific Western problem.

### Formulation

The simplest formulation of the problem consists in asking: what makes A be *that A*? What makes of a thing precisely that "individual" thing? What is the reason why A is precisely that A? What is the final "is" of a being? What is this "is" that belongs to that being alone, and thus lets it be what it finally *is*? Where does this individuality come from?

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Being-there] against the ontic *existenziell* as the concrete constitution of an individual human existence.

<sup>13</sup> Is not modern "democratic" society based on numerical equality? Do not numbers have the upper hand not only in economics, but also in politics and human relations? Does socialization necessarily imply quantification?

<sup>14</sup> See the mentioned study by Paul Horsch, where it is shown that for the Hindu and Buddhist traditions our problem is ontological, centered not so much on the concretion of essences, of ideas in particular individuals as on a "réalisation de l'être universel, absolu, dans les êtres individuels, relatifs" [realization of the universal, absolute Being in the individual, relative beings] (80). This mainly cosmic interpretation (see the myth of Prajapati), later in the light of *karman* (as individualizing factor), should be seen as typical of Hinduism. Buddhism starts, as it were, on the individual plane, at the empirical existence, and tries to explain the structure of the individual, not its origin. Horsch considers this in relation to the predominance of the impersonal in the Indian spirit, and ends his learned study saying, "Ce qui en Europe est resté pour une grande partie spéculation savante répondait en Inde, au plus profond besoin humain: se désindividualiser signifie libérer des conditions limitantes pour retourner à l'unité originelle et bienheureuse de l'être" [That which in Europe has remained largely academic speculation, in India responded to the deepest human need: to become deindividualized means to free oneself from limiting conditions so as to be able to return to the original blessed unity of being] (142).

## THREE “*LOCI*” OF THE PROBLEM

In order to understand a problem, we have to situate it in the context in which it is meaningful, that is, we have to find the proper *locus* (place) of the problem. Three *loci* seem to be of relevance here: the cosmological, the epistemological, and the ontological.

### The Cosmological *Locus*

To ask for a principle of individuation implies considering things not to be primordial and immediate, but somewhat secondary and derived. In point of fact, most systems of thought concerned with the problem of individuation assume either a superior agency, a cause of the individual things (Creator, Demiurge, Gods, etc.), or, at the least, a superiority of the species over the individual. The individual then appears to be precisely the individuation of the specific reality, the contraction of the species, the specific difference.<sup>1</sup> This amounts to saying that the first *locus* of this problem refers to the *cosmological assumption* just mentioned: that individuality is not the primary and original datum.<sup>2</sup> In point of fact, it was almost eclipsed during the peak of Western individualism, and it reappears now with the growth of socialization.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, a common Scholastic formulation is *De generatione individui seu de principio individuationis* [The generation of the individual or the principle of individuation].

<sup>2</sup> This may explain the traditional importance of the problem in Scholasticism and in neo-Thomism. See, for the latter, G. von Holtum, "Vom Individuationsprinzip," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 15 (1902): 440–48; P. Geny, "De materiae primae signatione," *Gregorianum* 2 (1921): 290–94; G. M. Manser, "Das thomistische Individuationsprinzip," *Divus Thomas Aquinas* 12 (1934): 221–37, 279–300; M. Thiel, "Der einheitliche Urgrund der Individuation in den geschaffenen einfachen wie in den körperlichen Substanzen nach *De ente et essentia*," *Divus Thomas Aquinas* 17 (1939): 61–74; U. Degl'Innocenti, "Il pensiero di san Tommaso sul principio d'individuazione," *Divus Thomas Aquinas* 45 (1942): 35–81; J. Bobik, "La doctrine de St. Thomas sur l'individuation des substances corporelles," *Revue Néoscholastique de Philosophie* 51 (1953): 5–41. As for other Scholastic tendencies, See chapter 6 in the fundamental study by E. Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot* (Paris: Vrin, 1952), 444–77. Cf. I. Tonna, "The Problem of Individuation in Scotus and Other Franciscan Thinkers of Oxford in the 13th Century," in *De Doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti. Acta Congressus Scotistici Internationalis* (Roma, 1968), saying that Scotus's solution has the "advantage of transforming the Greek man into a Christian" (259). Cf. also J. Cerqueira Gonçalves, "A Nauraleza do Individuo em João Duns Escoto," in *Humanismo Medieval* (Braga, 1971), 9–92.

<sup>3</sup> The literature is immense. From E. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1927), to E. W. Strono, "Individualization and Individual Rights," in *The Problem of the Individual*, op. cit., 101–27, there is a whole gamut of studies and opinions.

### The Epistemological Locus

The epistemological remark points out the twofold sense the question takes depending on whether we apply the principle of noncontradiction or that of identity in order to reach intelligibility.<sup>4</sup>

#### *The Principle of Noncontradiction*

Applying the principle of noncontradiction, we look for the individuation of a thing by trying to detect its difference. This method starts from the question: "What lets A be A?" that amounts to asking: "Why is A *that* A and not B?", that is, "Why is A not non-A?" In other words, "What makes A be *that* A?" will mean to ask, "What makes A different from non-A?"

An apple obviously differs from a bicycle. They are two different things. But what renders an apple *that* particular apple among other apples—this is more problematic. The principle of individuation does not only aim at identifying things but at identifying the *last difference* among things. That will be obtained from the distinction between *this* apple and any other one. *This* apple is *not* any other one. What is the nature of this "*not*" that supposedly contains all of otherness, as in the case of two elementary particles? This way of thinking tends to place the principle of individuation within the same criterion that distinguishes A from non-A. In other words, the emphasis will be on the *non*, detectable by some epistemic device. The accent is on *distinction* as an operation of the mind.

#### *The Principle of Identity*

By applying the principle of identity, we look for the individuation of a thing by trying to find the identity of the thing with itself, and thus to discover its uniqueness: "What makes A *that* A?" will amount to asking: "What makes A identical to itself?" This self-identity is conspicuous in the case of the apple and the bicycle. But what makes a bicycle be *that* particular bicycle becomes more difficult to answer. The particularity here will be found by a deeper look into the identity of this bicycle with itself. The bicycle will have to show its character of uniqueness. What is the nature of this *self* that apparently contains no differentiating elements, like two molecules of the same substance? This method tends to consider the principle of individuation within the same criterion that establishes the identity of A with itself. In other words, it will underscore the intrinsic uniqueness of things by some ontological hypothesis. The accent is on *separation* as an operation of the things themselves.

#### *An Example*

Here is a typical example of the different working of these two principles.

*God*—When looking for an ultimate reality, both approaches will search for the most important and valuable "thing." Now, the way of thinking mainly based on the principle of noncontradiction will obviously look for something different from everyday experience: the Ultimate will then be considered transcendent, wholly Other, superior, different, cause, mover, "provident," and the like. This procedure will lead to the "God" of the Abrahamic religious traditions. God is different, but He is still being" anyway—the Being.

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<sup>4</sup> I have suggested elsewhere that the primacy of the principle of identity characterizes the main trend of Indic thinking against the primacy of the principle of noncontradiction, on which hinges the bulk of Western thinking. See my *Kult-mysterium in Hinduismus und Christentum. Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Religionstheologie* (Freiburg-München: Karl Alber, 1964), 39–44.

*Brahman*—When looking for an ultimate reality, the way of thinking mainly based on the principle of identity will obviously look for something self-identical in our common experience: the Ultimate will then be considered immanent, the real One, basic, intrinsically identical, condition of possibility, and the like. This will lead to the *brahman* of the Indic religious tradition. *Brahman* is so separate that it is not even "being," and certainly not the Being.<sup>5</sup>

Our point is only to stress that the application of one or the other scheme will lead us to look for, and therefore to find, the principle of individuation either outside the being or in that very being. The first approach will be inclined to find individuation in external parameters like space and time as factors of differentiation,<sup>6</sup> or in the very working of our mind.<sup>7</sup> In the second case, the tendency will be to find individuation in the entity so individualized,<sup>8</sup> or in some constitutive element of it.<sup>9</sup>

### The Ontological Locus

The third remark refers to the ontological status of the question.

### The "Real" and the "Ideal" Factor

Here "what makes A be *that A*" not only depends on what assumptions our mind makes, nor on which principle of intelligibility we apply, but it also depends on the very nature of "A." What makes A "A" is not necessarily the same for human beings and for physical particles. Perhaps when speaking of a principle of individuation we take either a realistic or an idealistic assumption for granted, which may not be the case. In fact, what are we looking for when we look for a principle of individuation? Are we looking for something in our mind that compels us to individuate things? Or are we looking for something that makes things *really* individuated?

### Their Intrinsic Connection

The two questions are obviously and intrinsically connected and cannot be solved separately, with mutual exclusion. The former implies and is contained in the latter, and vice versa. The nature of "A" may be finally responsible for being *that A*. But the nature of "A" is the nature of "A" as it appears to our mind. I say that the alleged principle of individuation is rooted in our mind as well as in the nature of the "object" so individuated, and this irrespective of the epistemological theories we may hold.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See the chapter "Excursus on Brahman" in my *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), 104–15. In Vol. VII of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>6</sup> Schopenhauer could be mentioned here as an example.

<sup>7</sup> See Kant.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., the *haecceitas* of Duns Scotus and the *individuum seipsum individuat* of Leibniz's dissertation of 1663, *Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui*, 6.4.

<sup>9</sup> See many of the Scholastic theories originating from Aristotle, considering *materia* (see Averroes, followed by Albert) and *signata quantitate* (Thomas) as the principle of individuation.

<sup>10</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *In Boeth. De Trin.*, lect.2 (n.3), saying that "modus quo aliqua discutuntur debet congruere et rebus et nobis. Nisi enim rebus congrueret, res intelligi non possent; nisi vero congrueret nobis, nos capere non possemus" [the way in which things are discussed must fit both the things themselves and ourselves. . . . Otherwise we cannot understand]. He here repeats what Boethius expressed in *De Trinitate* II (PL 64.1250A) by quoting the famous sentence of Aristotle at the beginning of *Ethic. Nic.* I.3 (1904b23–25): "In the same spirit therefore should each type of statement be received;

We become aware of the ontological *locus* when we discover that the "real" or "ideal" nature of a being has its role to play in determining the principle of individuation of that being. We cannot ask for a principle of individuation before finding out whether all and sundry things fit into one principle. In other words, what makes a being be what it is is not independent of the kind of being that specific being is.

### The Relationship of the Three "*Loci*"

These three loci are mutually related. The cosmological assumption will condition the epistemological and ontological ones, and vice versa. The application of the twofold scheme of intelligibility will condition the ontological preferences, and also vice versa. Keeping in mind the above-mentioned *loci*, a whole history of the principle of individuation could be developed. We, however, limit ourselves to a more succinct approach.

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for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits (*disciplinati enim est instantum certitudinem inquirere circa unumquodque genus, in quantum natura rei recipit*).<sup>10</sup> See also Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gent.*, I.3.

## THREE APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM

Our three *loci* will help us understand three approaches to the same problem. The first approach consists in questioning the cosmological *locus*. The second examines the different epistemological answers, depending on whether we tackle the issue from the inside or the outside of the being in question. The third approach explicates an underlying ontological assumption and discover a double principle of individuation. We now examine these three approaches.

### **The Denial of the Principle**

The first approach maintains that, properly speaking, there is no principle of individuation except in the case of the above-mentioned cosmological assumptions. In other cases, this principle is only an artificial and pragmatic device that, for practical purposes, allows us to measure, divide, and catalogue things, as the physico-mathematical units of grams, meters, and seconds allow us to handle things, without in any way claiming that the individuation belongs to the things measured or to the nature of our mind. The underlying assumption here is either a radical atomistic pluralism or an extreme monism.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Atomism*

In the first case, individuals are the primary, the "given" and irreducible reality, and thus without need of any principle individuating them. If the question "What makes A be *that A*?" has to be answered somehow, this first attitude would simply reply: *nothing*. Nothing "makes" the individual, because the individual is the *datum*, the reality, all the rest being speculations on it. It is therefore a wrong question to ask for a principle of individuation, because there is no such principle. Things, inasmuch as they are, are individuals, and nothing makes them so—neither an objective entity nor a subjective property.

#### *Monism*

In the second case, the only true individual is the totality, and the rest are only practical divisions according to accepted pragmatic devices. The entire reality is thus an—or rather *the*—individual.

#### *The Primacy of the Individual*

This does not preclude investigating the cause of being, or discussing creational and the originary problems, but it denies the existence of a principle of individuation as something

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<sup>1</sup> Pluralism is here the opposite of monism in the sense of Lotze, Renouvier, W. James, etc., and not in the more sociological sense of contemporary studies.

previous to the individual *qua* individual that makes it itself. The individual is *that* individual, and even "individual" is an abstraction.<sup>2</sup> There only exists *that* and *that* individual. The principle of individuation is nothing *qua* principle, because the reason why an individual is an individual is precisely its own individuality, understood according to either an atomistic or a monistic conception. This would be the very principle of being, and there would be no need for a second principle.

### The Epistemological Approach

The second approach recognizes that the question has a certain meaning, and tries to find it out by leaning on one of the two above-mentioned schemes of intelligibility as the guiding principle.

#### *Principium Identitatis Indiscernibilium*

The famous principle of indiscernibles formulated by Leibniz<sup>3</sup> and taken up by modern logical analysis<sup>4</sup> could provide us the criterion of distinction.<sup>5</sup>

The *principium identitatis indiscernibilium* affirms that there are no (two) absolutely indiscernible things.<sup>6</sup> Leibniz's argument is well known: the principle of sufficient reason would break if there were two indiscernible things.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See the interesting, traditional disquisition about the *individuum vagum*, e.g., as "a certain man" (*aliquis homo*) or as the very notion of person, especially when applied to the Trinity. "Sed individuum vagum, ut aliquis homo, significat naturam communem cum determinato modo existendi qui competit singularibus, ut scilicet sit per se subsistens distinctum ab aliis" [The phrase *individuum vagum*, as a certain man, means the common nature together with a specific way of existing that belongs to individuals, i.e., so that it may subsist *in se*, distinct from others] (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, q.30, a.4). In this sense, Christian Scholasticism used to justify the term "person" when applied to the three divine Persons, without on the one hand falling into tritheism, or postulating a fourth common principle (*quaternitas*) on the other.

<sup>3</sup> *Monadology* 9: "It is necessary, indeed, that each monad be different from every other, for there are never in nature two different beings which are exactly alike and in which it is not possible to find an internal difference, or one founded upon an intrinsic quality." In his works, Leibniz formulates both a logical principle ("It is not possible for two individuals to exist completely identical, that is, to differ only numerically") and an empirical one ("I have remarked of two individuals . . . that their *difference* is always *more than numerical*").

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, K. Grelling, "Identitas indiscernibilium," *Erkenntnis* 6 (1936): 252–59; Max Black, "The Identity of Indiscernibles," *Mind* 61, no. 242 (April 1952): 153–64; Gustav Bergmann, "The Identity of Indiscernibles and the Formalistic Definition of Identity," *Mind* 62, no. 245 (January 1953): 75–79; N. L. Wilson, "The Identity of Indiscernibles and the Symmetrical Universe," *Mind* 62, no. 248 (October 1953): 506–11; A. J. Ayer, *The Identity of Indiscernibles* (Brussels, 1953), 124–29; D. J. Connor, "The Identity of Indiscernibles," *Analysis* 14 (1952): 103–10.

<sup>5</sup> See also the classical treatises by B. Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London, 1919); A. N. Whitehead and B. Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910–1913); L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921, etc.).

<sup>6</sup> "There are not two indiscernible individuals," Leibniz says in his famous *Fourth Letter to Clarke*. Lorenz is anyway right in saying that many authors have overlooked Leibniz's complex views.

<sup>7</sup> See Wolff calling the principle of individuation *ratio sufficiens intrinseca individui* [sufficient reason, intrinsic to the individual], in *Ontologia*, 288; quoted by Ferrater-Mora, loc. cit.

Much has been written recently on the subject, and modern authors have refined the Leibnizian formulation.<sup>8</sup> Yet they have not agreed whether the principle "is necessarily true"<sup>9</sup> or not,<sup>10</sup> the question being whether this principle is analytic or not.<sup>11</sup>

We will not enter now into the logical discussion, but we will utilize it to clarify the issue from another, more philosophical and less philosophico-analytical, point of view.<sup>12</sup> This does not mean to minimize the importance of logical clarifications, but only to properly situate them as indispensable sciences for an ontological inquiry.<sup>13</sup>

### *Indiscernibility or Identity?*

Now we can ask: Are things identical because they are indiscernible, or are they indiscernible because they are identical?<sup>14</sup> Is identity based on indiscernibility or vice versa?<sup>15</sup>

Obviously, we are here dealing with truly indiscernible things and not merely nondiscerned ones. I may be shortsighted and incapable of discerning two objects that a normal sight

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., "It should be observed that by 'indiscernibles' he [Leibniz] cannot have meant two objects which agree as to all properties, for one of the properties of X is to be identical with X and therefore this property would necessarily belong to Y if X and Y agreed in all their properties. Some limitation of the common properties necessary to make things indiscernible is therefore implied by the necessity of an axiom" (B. Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, op. cit., 1:51); or again: "To say that B and C are totally indistinguishable seems wholly devoid of meaning" (*An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* [1940], 127). See also J. Ayer, quoted below.

<sup>9</sup> "I am still inclined to hold that the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is necessarily true" (Ayer, op. cit., 35, and the last words in the article).

<sup>10</sup> See Max Black, op. cit.: a dialogue between A in favor of the principle and B against it and leaving both unconvinced. He introduces the fiction of a symmetrical universe (double, like in a mirror, and indiscernible). This idea is criticized by Wilson (loc. cit.). He quotes in G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies* (1922), 307, and C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 4.311, against the principle. See the critical remarks on Black's article by Gustav Bergmann in *The Metaphysics of Logical Positivism* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), 268–76. See Wilson's last words: "Discernible different objects are numerically different; but if the world were symmetrical, then two objects might differ in a way that could not be stated in a language which lacked a token-link with the world."

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., G. Bergmann, art. cit., yet not all is solved with this. See the often quoted Wittgenstein sentence: "Russel's definition of '=' won't do; because according to it one cannot say that two objects have all their properties in common (even if this proposition is never true, it is nevertheless significant)," *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.5302. See Russell and Whitehead, *Principia Mathematica*, op. cit., 1:168; See also the critical remarks by K. Lorenz on the a priori approach.

<sup>12</sup> See for instance the issues of *Philosophical Studies* back in the 1950s. Most of the papers deal with topics relevant to our problem.

<sup>13</sup> "The *principium individuationis* is relative to language," says N. L. Wilson, "Space, Time, and Individuals," *Journal of Philosophy* 52, no. 22 (October 27, 1955): 589. He distinguishes "space-time language" from "substance language," the latter being identified with ordinary language.

<sup>14</sup> See the conclusion of Lorenz: "Die Begründung des Ununterscheidbarkeitsatzes besteht also genau darin, sowohl für abstrakte Gegenstände, eine adäquate Relation dasselbe einzuführen und dann zu zeigen, dass die Selbigkeit mit der logischen Definition der Identität äquivalent ist" [Therefore, the foundation of indiscernibility lies, as well as for abstract objects, in introducing an adequate sameness-relationship and then showing that this sameness is equivalent to the logic definition of identity].

<sup>15</sup> See the formulation by Nicholas of Cusa: "Scimus . . . quod nulla duo in universo per omnia aequalia esse possunt simpliciter" [We know . . . that no two things in the universe can simply be identical in everything] (*De docta ignorantia* II). The reason here being the idea of a perfectly structured and hierarchical universe.

may discern. My lack of "discernment" does not make them identical. Through Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty we have detected a physical limit of discernibility in a more rigorous way than Leibniz. But indiscernibility is also an operation of the mind, and here logical analysis is fully justified. We have to clarify our language, define our terms, know what we are talking about. The corrective of linguistic analysis and logical positivism is a necessary one, and philosophy can no longer ignore their findings or bypass their contributions.

And yet, the very fact that language is an ever-unfinished human construct and a living reality proves that it feeds on a linguistically invisible source that linguistic analysis, in its turn, cannot either ignore or analyze. And it is here that an ontological option seems inevitable.<sup>16</sup>

### *Two Options*

The two options are not the same, and yet they both make sense. It is logically consistent and perfectly intelligible to affirm that the individual reality of a thing, that is, its own identity, depends on the discernibility of that very thing, but—by definition—there is no other way to discern that thing than the set of discerning criteria we own. We can only speak of what we know and inasmuch as we know it. "Two" indiscernible things amount to a contradiction, since the only basis for assuming that "they are two" is a certain discernibility, at least *solo numero*.<sup>17</sup> In a word, the laws of thinking are decisive for the modes of Being—and any talk about Being is a function of our thought about it.

On the other hand, it is also logically consistent and perfectly intelligible to affirm that the individual reality of a thing, that is, its own identity, depends on the thing itself and not on its discernible properties. In such a case, discernibility is only a negative criterion (two discernible things cannot be identical), but indiscernibility is not the positive basis for identity: two indiscernible things would not necessarily prove identical. Our example of a shortsighted vision could also be applied to the mind. In a word, the laws of thinking do not coalesce with the modes of Being—and individuality is rooted in Being.

We may now turn our attention to each of these two basic attitudes and apply them to our problem of the principle of individuation.

### *The Epistemological Noncontradiction*

This attitude applies the distinctions worked out by the principle of noncontradiction. Discernibility (of the differences) will be the decisive category.<sup>18</sup>

We can apply Leibniz's principle in an epistemological direction. There is no other "sufficient reason" than that disclosed in our knowledge of the thing, namely in its discernibility. The sufficient reason of things lies in that very sufficient reason, and that reason cannot be severed from (our) human reason.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See again Ayer saying, "What we have to consider is not whether there actually are *in nature* two indiscernible, real, absolute beings [in Leibniz's formulation], but whether it makes sense to say that there are," op. cit., 28. As for the "commonplace" statement that distinctions between individuals are properties, see Ayer's chapter, "Individuals?", op. cit., 1–25.

<sup>17</sup> The expression is in Leibniz's *Discours de Métaphysique*.

<sup>18</sup> Kant, for instance, could not accept Leibniz's views since for him the appearances do not constitute the thing itself. See *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 264, 320, etc.

<sup>19</sup> See the famous sentence of Aristotle, *Met.* II.1 (993b30–31): "As each thing is in respect of Being, so it is in respect of truth."

### *Where Does Specific Identity Lie?*

This approach works without difficulty when it is but a question of discerning external and material things, or when we take the principle as a merely linguistic device to introduce order and logical consistency into our speeches.<sup>20</sup> Let us assume "two" hypothetical elementary particles. We call them "two" because we have distinguished them somehow. If they were indistinguishable, there would not be sufficient reason to call them "two": they would not be two, indeed, for what makes *two* things is the fact that they are discernible. For instance, we detect a certain individual particle because it occupies a certain position in time and space. The individualization, in this case, is external to the entity, because the entity does not affirm itself in any more intimate way.

The difficulty arises when epistemological discrimination cannot reach the core of the thing discriminated. In other words, the principle of noncontradiction does not enter into the heart of the matter, as it were: it only discriminates from outside. There may be things that individualize themselves due not only to an external position but an internal self-identity, so that even if they should occupy the *same* external differentiating coordinates, they would remain different.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Ontological Approach**

The third approach relies on the second option.

#### *The Ontological Identity*

This option basically depends on the principle of identity. It will affirm that, if "things" are indiscernible, it is because "they" are identical. The epistemological indiscernibility is here grounded in an ontological identity. Identity as an ontological category takes the primacy. Each thing thus offers its own criterion of indiscernibility, rooted in its own being and not in some accidental or external cause. "Two" indiscernible "things" would have no proper nor sufficient reason to be "two." In other words, the principle of individuation (that by virtue of which things are precisely what they are in their individuality) is intrinsic to the things themselves. There are no indiscernible things—this principle will say—because everything that is has in itself the sufficient reason to be what it is, and therefore it is intrinsically discernible from any other entity. There are not two identical things in the world of Being.<sup>22</sup> Each entity is what it is and, precisely because of this, is discernible as what it is.

<sup>20</sup> See W. V. Quine suggesting the "maxim of the *identification of indiscernibles*: objects, indistinguishable from one another within the terms of a given discourse, should be construed as identical for that discourse," in *From Logical Point of View*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 71.

<sup>21</sup> Though the examples of Black's radially symmetrical universe, or Ayer's infinite series of sounds (...a b c d a b c d a ...) following one another at equal intervals, always betray an external vantage point (at least to think and formulate the possibility) and thus a certain discernibility, we could speak of indiscernibility by abstracting the thinker. Perhaps another example could be the ideally identical thought, in the sense of a pure phenomenological analysis led by several persons: a newcomer, in learning that particular, pure *idea*, could not say if it belongs to one or another thinker.

<sup>22</sup> This is the well-known formulation by Seneca, *Epist. CXIII.16*, i.e., that all things are different and there are not two perfectly identical leaves in nature. Interestingly enough, this very example is reported by Leibniz in his conversation with the *Kurfürstin*.

*Where Does Numerical Identification Lie?*

This approach easily accounts for the qualitative uniqueness of beings, as we will still have occasion to see. When each being has enough identity—enough “personality,” we say a little later, and without any metaphor—when each being manifests itself as it is, out of itself, there is no problem with discerning it and finding its identity.

The difficulty arises when there is no way to identify the thing except by defining it. In other words, the principle of identity seems incapable of finding out the individuation of beings that do not present an *αυτός* (*ταυτοτης*), an *idem* (*identitas*), a self (*selfhood*) out of themselves, as it were—of beings that cannot manifest themselves, speak for themselves. The problem becomes acute in any question of merely numerical distinction. But, I repeat, the issue here at stake is if human beings can differ *solo numero*, that is, whether they are numerable qua persons.

## THE DOUBLE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUATION

By integrating the epistemological and the ontological approaches, and by using both principles (of noncontradiction and of identity), I would like to suggest that the famous principle of individuation is, in point of fact, a double one.

It should be kept in mind that our reflections do not put this principle into question; they do not wonder whether there *should* be a principle of individuation at all, or whether it meets a real philosophical need of our times. Our investigation aims at understanding the uses made of this principle, and it will discover that, in fact, there are *two* such principles.

To understand Man, we have to understand his culture. Even assuming that we could do without the principle of individuation, we should nonetheless try to understand this intellectual device, which Man has used in order to understand himself and the world around him.<sup>1</sup>

### The "Many" and the "Other"

In the Western world, since Leucippus and Democritus, the individual, the indivisible, the *ετομόν*, also called "the each one" (*το καθ'εκαστόν*), was the very opposite of both the universal, *το καθ'ολού*, and the species, *το ειδος*. In either case, however, we are dealing with a numerical individualization in a series, conceptual or factual as it may be. So the word "individual" shows a fundamental ambivalence, not always clearly detected: individual as opposite to *many*, and as opposite to *other*.

We may take a traditional example: God, Moon, Man, and Socrates are four names referring to four different classes of individuals. God is by definition a unique individual, so that, if *ex hypothesi* there were a second God, it (He) would be one and the same God. The Moon is an existentially unique member in the class of the satellites of Earth. There could be more moons, but de facto there is only one. Man is again unique among the species of an *arbor porphyriana*:<sup>2</sup> it includes a multiplicity of men/people within itself, but it is unique against all other classes of beings. Socrates also is unique, and in a nonmultipliable way. There may be many men/people, but there is only one Socrates, and he does not allow any further division if we are to preserve the wholeness of what Socrates is.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Contemporary hermeneutics will agree that the *interpretation* of a given (text, fact, reality) also belongs to the interpreted *datum*.

<sup>2</sup> There is an interesting line running from Aristotle (*Top.* I.5 [102a118], etc.) to modern science through Porphyry (*Isagog.* II [2a5], IV [4a14], etc.), Boethius (*In Porph. Comm.* III [PL 64.103] etc.), Avicenna and the Scholastic, as any history of Logic can show.

<sup>3</sup> "Again, some things are one in number, other [one] in species, others in genus, others by analogy. In number those whose matter is one, in species those whose definition is one, in genus those to which the same figure of predication applies, by analogy those which are related as a third thing is to a fourth" (Aristotle, *Met.* V.6 [1016b32]).

We may here disregard the problems of the first two examples and direct our attention to the last two cases.<sup>4</sup>

The individual as opposite to the *many* (individuals) gives the quantitative aspect of individuality: the single thing in its isolation, the number. The individual as opposite to the *other* (individual) gives the qualitative aspect of individuality: the individual thing in its solitude, in what the ancients called the *ατομον ειδος* or *infima species*. Now, these two differences do not coalesce. A difference in number does not imply a difference in quality, and a difference in quality does not necessarily imply a difference in quantity.<sup>5</sup>

The numerical difference is of an altogether different nature than the specific difference. In the traditional example, the difference between Socrates and Plato is not reducible to the same type of difference—qua difference—existing between Man and horse. This is quite obvious, though sometimes overlooked.<sup>6</sup>

What I would like to add is that the difference between Socrates and Plato is also of another kind—always qua difference—than the difference between Rocinante and Babieca.<sup>7</sup>

### Singularity and Individuality

We may here recall the traditional and etymological definition of an individual.<sup>8</sup> We may then say that a thing has *singularity* when it is indivisible in itself, undivided, atomic (*in se indistinctum*) and that it has *individuality* when, besides this, it is different from others (*ab aliis distinctum*). The two moments should be carefully differentiated.<sup>9</sup> Singularity is the particular case of plurality.<sup>10</sup> There is no singularity except against plurality. To call "single" something that cannot have a plural is a contradiction in terms. Individuality, on the other

<sup>4</sup> The disturbing effect of the traditional example is that it blurs the fundamental distinction we make between *person* and *things*.

<sup>5</sup> See the well-known theological distinction of the Persons in the Christian Trinity: each one is *alius sed non aliud*, different from the other Person, but not different in nature, "another, but not other." See also the "different" attributes applied to God or to *brahman*: they are different qualities *quoad nos*, but not different from God or *brahman*.

<sup>6</sup> We cannot here have a more thorough look at this old question, which is being quite neglected in our individualistic times. See, for an initial study, Bernard Bosanquet, *The Value and Destiny of the Individual* (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1968), and *The Principles of Individuality and Value* (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1968); Wolfgang Büchel, "Individualität und Weschelwirkung im Bereich des materiellen Seins," *Scholastik* 30, no. 1 (1956): 1–30, and "Zur philosophischen Deutung des quantenmechanischen Indeterminismus," *Scholastik* 23, no. 2 (1952): 225–40; Karl Löwith, "Das Individuum in der Rolle des Mitmenschen," 2nd ed. (Darmstadt, 1962); Jan Lukasiewicz, "On the Principle of Contradiction in Aristotle," *Review of Metaphysics* 24, no. 3 (March 1971): 485–509; Rainer Schubert-Soldern, "Kann man heute noch von Individualität sprechen?," in *Akten des XIV Int. Kongress für Philosophie* (Wien: Herder, 1970), 5:21–29.

<sup>7</sup> The horses of, respectively, Don Quixote and El Cid Campeador.

<sup>8</sup> "Individuum autem est quod est in se indistinctum, ab aliis vero distinctum," Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, I, q.29, a.4 [the individual is what in itself is undivided, but is divided from others].

<sup>9</sup> See X. Zubiri, *Sobre la esencia* (Madrid: Sociedad de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1962), saying, "No hay individuación de la especie, sino especiación del individuo" (166) and distinguishing between singleness and individuality (166ff.): "Every individuality is single, but not every singleness is individual." According to his terminology, the elementary particles in modern physics, for instance, would be single, but they have no individuality, whereas a living being would have at least an inchoate individuality, and Man would be fully an individual.

<sup>10</sup> See Aristotle, *Categ.* II (1b6–7).

hand, does not need to be quantitative and stands for the internal constitution of those beings that have a certain possession of their being. Singularity has quantitative overtones, whereas individuality presents a qualitative character. However, we should not stress the quantitative-qualitative distinction excessively, because our problem goes far deeper than the problem suggested by these two Aristotelian categories.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, individuality does not designate a quality but a person.

Our point is that in the world of our experience there are *single* things that allow a plural, that are determined by a series of attributes, and that cannot be divided further on without ceasing to be what they are. They do not seem to have any other identity than the one given by their identification. There are also other *individual* things in the world of our experience, which, besides all this, seem to have an internal power of manifesting themselves, of *speaking out* what they are. They seem to possess themselves in such a way that their own identity appears somewhat independent of their identification.<sup>12</sup>

### The Two Principles

In other terms, if what makes this apple "this apple" is different from what makes this individual person "this individual person," we are justified in distinguishing a double principle of individuation: a *principle of singularity* based on external factors, in order to distinguish one thing from another, and a *principle of individuality* grounded in the internal constitution of beings capable of self-identity.<sup>13</sup>

The principle of identity of indiscernibles would have to distinguish between an indiscernibility that shows the singularity of a thing (so that "two" indiscernible single "things" would be identical—and thus there are no "two" such "things"), and an indiscernibility that results from the individuality of a thing (so that two indiscernible individual "things" are not necessarily identical). Yet, if there is no reason for their indiscernibility, the identity would be equally affirmed, though for an opposite reason.<sup>14</sup> "Two" indiscernible particles, crystals, molecules (provided that they exist) would not be two; two indiscernible human beings (admitting the case) would still remain two. Singularity is a numerical quality. Individuality has an ontological character.

<sup>11</sup> "Etymologically the word *individuum*, as much as its Greek prototype *atomos*, does not mean particular, separate, but *indivisible*, and, as such, is not a correct antithesis of concepts such as general, collective, universal," C. Regamey, "The Individual and the Universal in East and West," in Ch. Moore, ed., *Status of the Individual in East and West.*, op. cit., 505.

<sup>12</sup> To put the same idea in Scholastic terms, I would say of the human person what Thomas Aquinas said of the angels: each person is a *species* on its own. It was mainly the soul-body dichotomy homologate to the *forma-materia* theory that prevented the Scholastics from reaching a more integrated conception of human personhood. See the thoughtful reflection by Thomas in *Compendium theologiae*, I.71 and its interpretation by A. Forest, *La structure métaphysique du concret selon St. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1931), ch. 9, esp. 465ff.

<sup>13</sup> *De nominibus non est disputandum*, and the terminology is sometimes just the opposite, as in the following beautiful passage: "Gaudet igitur unumquodque de sua singularitate, quae tanta in ipso est quod non est plurificabilis, sicut nec in Deo nec mundo nec angelis" [Each thing enjoys its own singularity, which is so strong in itself that it cannot be purified, as well as it cannot in God nor in the universe nor in the angels] (Nicholas of Cusa, *De venatione sapientiae* 22).

<sup>14</sup> See my *Ontonomía de la Ciencia. Sobre el sentido de la Ciencia y sus relaciones con la Filosofía* (Madrid: Gredos, 1961), 114ff., 295ff., 325ff., etc., where this distinction is worked out in the light of the relationship between philosophy and science especially in relation to Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty.

This double principle may also explain why even the strictest linguistic analysis of the problem always remains floating between the "necessity" of the principle of indiscernibles and its non-self-evident character. The principle applied to *singularity*, I submit, is necessary and self-evident because it is discernibility or indiscernibility that makes things nonsingle or single. In this case, speaking of the identity of what we postulate as identical amounts to repeating the definition of identity. The principle applied to *individuality*, on the other hand, is not self-evident, for, by relying on discernibility alone, we cannot say whether a thing has—or will have—such an individuality.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, when "things" totally obey the laws of thought, so that the latter become the ultimate criteria for the "being" or "existence" of the former, the principle of indiscernibility does not leave any doubt. But when "things" have *their own* constitution, impermeable to thought, then we can only say that our indiscernibility does not allow us to speak of two things, and yet we are unable to affirm a complete identity.

#### *The Complex Principle*

In point of fact, we should speak of a "complex principle of individuation" according to which *singularity* and *individuality* represent the two extremes of a range of cases that make this distinction less abrupt. Atomic particles, macro-material things, plants, animals, and human beings do not necessarily follow the same rules. In other words, we should not treat *names* like numbers. We may explicate this a little further with the extreme examples of numbers on the one hand and the human person on the other.

#### *The Principle of Numerality*

At the nadir of the principle of singularity we have the principle of *numerality*. This latter is the extreme case of singularity. When what makes A "that particular A" of a class of similar elements is only a formal distinction according to a certain univocal axiom of differentiation, based on the minimum possible difference, we have numerical distinction. An apple is a single element in the class "apples," but it may still differ from another apple in taste, color, weight, and so on. Two elementary particles of a same class may differ in their spatiotemporal coordinates. When the only possible difference is our own axiom of differentiation, not based on any quality intrinsic or extrinsic to the object, but on the axiom itself, then we have a purely numerical distinction.<sup>16</sup>

#### *The Principle of Individuality*

But the minimal differentiation among things does not need to be only numerical. Numerical distinction is the minimal thinkable distinction, but not the minimal individual distinction. We may put apples and oranges in the same basket, but we cannot blur the difference between individual human beings and single material things. The importance of this double principle is its refusal to treat things as people and people as things. Let us just

<sup>15</sup> The debate on the individuality of a human fetus seems to be a case in point as to the applicability of this principle. Can we simply postulate that before six months we just remove a "body" and after that we remove (kill) a person?

<sup>16</sup> From the 1877 work of Husserl, *Über den Begriff der Zahl*, to the 1910 *Principia Mathematica* of Whitehead-Russell, the theory of numbers has been a major problem in the philosophy of science. It can suffice to cite the names of Cassirer, Dedekind, Frege, Peano, and Riemann.

stick, for now, to the methodological reflection that one and the same method cannot be indiscriminately applied to heterogeneous entities. If Man is, in this world, something with the peculiar feature of a reflective consciousness, we cannot apply a mere "body count" to "individuate" him.

### *The Anthropological Difference*

We could here speak of an *anthropological difference* against the *specific difference*. One of the classical definitions of Man consists of subsuming him into the general framework of classification and definition, then looking for the species *Homo sapiens* that will distinguish Man from the immediate genre of mammals or from the more conspicuous *genus* of animals. Man would then be defined as a *national animal*, following Aristotle's famous definition,<sup>17</sup> with all the variations in that same line of thought.<sup>18</sup>

What concerns us here is to denounce an attitude that applies the principle of individuation while considering Man "just another" being among existing beings, in a more or less Porphyrian fashion. Perhaps the only possible way to counteract the humiliating and deleterious effect of so reifying Man was to consider him "the king of creation" and the most perfect of all creatures.<sup>19</sup>

We could introduce the anthropological difference by going back to the patristic exegesis in which Man was seen as "image"<sup>20</sup> of God against the rest of creation, considered only God's "footprint." However, nowadays, a form of thinking that rejects both theistic and creational hypotheses is more aware of the uniqueness of Man's existence and the incomparability of his being.

We call *anthropological difference* that constitutive difference that makes Man "Man," distinguishing him not from his immediate *genus*, but from the whole of reality; this would be his *Dasein*, his uniquely (human) existence.<sup>21</sup> Here the principle of individuation is not what makes Man a specimen, a sample of his species because of a specific difference (which, in its turn, is a particular "individual" of a broader *genus*). Man's individuation is not his singularity, but his individuality—based on an anthropological difference that expresses the unique participation in the entire reality, which we call "personhood."<sup>22</sup>

### *The Ontonomic Order*

To have applied to people (without any theological counterbalance) the *principle of singularity*, which accounts for differences only by virtue of extrinsic characteristics—like the varying situations in space and time—instead of the *principle of individuality*, which recognizes the intrinsic irreducibility of each "individual," has had obnoxious effects on

<sup>17</sup> See *Politeia* I.2 (1253a9–10): λογον δε μονον ανθρωπος εχει των ζωων [Man is the only animal (whom Nature has) endowed with *logos* (speech)]. See also *Eth. Nic.* I.6 (1098a7).

<sup>18</sup> See from Augustine: *anima rationalis* (*De moribus ecclesiae*, I.27.52) and Thomas Aquinas: *animal rationale mortale* (*Summa theol.*, I, q.29, a.4, ad 2) all the way up to Pascal's *roseau pensant* and Descartes's *res cogitans*.

<sup>19</sup> See Gn 1:26–29.

<sup>20</sup> Based on Gn 1:26: "Let us make Man in Our image and likeness."

<sup>21</sup> We are not quoting any specific existentialist philosopher because, although with fundamental differences, the idea is becoming a more and more common human view.

<sup>22</sup> Many problems, such as abortion and limiting the population explosion, are directly related to the conception of Man either as single "individual" or as "individual" person.

human civilization. It has contributed to the domination of number, the tyranny of the quantitative over the qualitative, the social order based on the *maximum* (of wealth, power, property, children . . .) instead of the *optimum*—which should not be extrinsically gained by forcefully curtailing the expression of things, but rather by realizing the harmonious growth of beings that are all *ontonomically* related.

By "ontonomy" I mean the inherent order of reality that excludes the extrinsic *heteronomic* domination of one order of things over another, as well as the disconnected—often chaotic, not to say cancerous—thriving of *autonomous* beings, as if they were alone among the whole of reality or had "rights" that were no concern of or for the "others."<sup>23</sup>

### Consequences

One of the consequences of this principle of individuality is that the "last difference" between two individuals is not merely numerical; or rather, the real difference *cannot* be numerical at all. Seven bodies are more than three bodies, but seven persons are neither more nor less, *qua person*, than three persons. We cannot sacrifice or do injustice to three persons in order to help seven. The quantitative factor does not apply here. People are not numbers.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See my "Le concept d'ontonomie," in *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Philosophy, Brussels, 1953* (Amsterdam-Louvain, 1953), 3:182–88.

<sup>24</sup> The forthcoming problem will not be whether to sacrifice millions of Jews or Ukrainians for the supposed benefit of another group, but whether to give access to a lifeboat in an ecologically sinking world. And what will be frightening is that for three-quarters of humankind there will be no imputable criminal or scapegoat, no Hitler, and done or undone almost without striking or visible violence.



## SECTION IX

### CREATION AND NOTHINGNESS\*

\* \* \*

### CREATION: *EX NIHILO SED NON IN NIHILUM* NOTHINGNESS: *AD QUEM SED NON A QUO*

*Et substantia mea tamquam nihilum ante te.*

Ps 38(39):6<sup>1</sup>

Paul Tillich declared, near the end of his life, that he would like to have rewritten his entire theology after his encounter with Japan. Fortunately, the same does not apply to Fritz Buri. It seems fitting to dedicate this meditation on one of the central pivots of the Western world to a friend who has taken his Christian tradition, his contemporary calling, and the traditions of Japan so seriously.

My long dedication to the problems of creation<sup>2</sup> and of nothingness<sup>3</sup> have led me to

\* In *Theologische Zeitschrift* 33 (*Festgabe für Fritz Buri zum 70. Geburtstag*) (Basel, 1977), 344–52.

<sup>1</sup> "My substance is like nothing before You," in the *Vulgate* text, on the basis of the LXX: καὶ υποστατής μου ὡσεὶ οὐδὲν εγνωπίον σου. The New Latin version says: "Et vita mea quasi nihil est coram te" [My life is almost nothing in Your presence], and the New English Bible: "And my whole life is nothing in thy sight."

<sup>2</sup> See my "La creación en la metafísica india" (with a selection of texts) in *Misterio y Revelación. Hinduismo y Cristianismo: Encuentro de dos culturas* (1971), 83–109; *El concepto de naturaleza* (1972), 102–35. Section VI of this volume.

<sup>3</sup> See my *El silencio del Dios* (1970). In Vol. V of this *Opera Omnia. Śūnyatā and Pleroma. The Buddhist and Christian Response to the Human Predicament* (1972); now in Volume VI, Book 2, of this *Opera Omnia*.

entertain an intriguing suspicion, which I would like to submit here as a tentative working hypothesis for understanding the *contemporary concern with nothingness* among a good number of thinkers in the Western world.<sup>4</sup> This hypothesis comes out of cross-cultural studies and could be characterized as a subproduct of such an approach, for I do not deal here with an inter-cultural issue, but with an intracultural problem within the Western horizon.

In comparing the different philosophical schemes throughout the history of human thought concerning the problem that in Western languages may be called the problem of creation, one is struck by the underlying and deep continuity between the Jewish-Christian-Islamic tenet of *creatio ex nihilo* and the central position that nothingness occupies in a representative segment of contemporary Western thought. This idea is reinforced when the contemporary idea of nothingness is compared with parallel notions in Indic and Japanese thought. They arise from different horizons.

If I had written this paper in German, I might have titled it "Werden und Vergehen. Die Bipolarität des Abendlandes."<sup>5</sup> If I had followed my own inclinations in English, I would have written "Be-Coming and Coming to Naught: The Two Poles of Western Culture," because I think of the exit from and entry into Nothingness as one of the cultural invariants of the three millennia of Western culture, which speaks for the dynamism of the once-Mediterranean and now-Atlantic world. "Creación y anonadamiento,"<sup>6</sup> in the ambivalence of the verbal and pronominal forms, is probably what I have in mind: "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."<sup>7</sup> This seemingly purposeless display of languages bears the serious intent of centering my topic. It is important to detect the unbroken leitmotif in the evolution of Western thought before sailing across the Four Seas. One of the threads of this Western trait is the subject matter of this paper.<sup>8</sup>

## 1

My hypothesis is this: The modern, mainly Continental-European notion of *nothingness* is a secularized and *inverted* idea of the theological dogma of *creation* out of nothing. The pretemporal theological notion of nothingness at the very source of being is converted into the posttemporal philosophical notion of nothingness at the very end of existence. The *ontological* nothingness as the horizon of created beings is here converted into an *anthropological* nothingness.

Theological nothingness stands as the guarantee for growth and development of contingent being in the same way that philosophical nothingness stands as the guarantee for freedom and responsibility of the individual. In other words, there is a common structure in the entire Western civilization, beginning with Parmenides and Greek philosophy, passing through the Christian confrontation with the Hellenic *forma mentis*, and finishing in the very reversal of the same pattern in modernity. In short, modern secularized thought is as sacred as traditional religious thought. Theology has reentered philosophy through the back door.

<sup>4</sup> I have in mind not only thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, Zubiri, etc., but also philosophers like Carnap, Bergson, Blondel, etc. Non-Western authors (the Japanese K. Nishida, S. Hisamatsu, Y. Takeuchi, etc.) are here left out of consideration, except in the last part.

<sup>5</sup> "Becoming and Vanishing: The Bipolarity of the West."

<sup>6</sup> "Creation and turning into (no-)nothing."

<sup>7</sup> "The more it changes, the more it is the same thing."

<sup>8</sup> It should go without saying that I am not touching upon the substantives, i.e., the formidable issues of creation and nothingness, but exclusively upon the "and" that relates them.

Absolute nothingness is unthinkable in both systems of thought. It is related either to a Supreme Being—to God—in the one case, or to existence—to Man—in the second.

Nothingness stands, in both instances, for risk, contingency, change. Nothingness is what makes the creature a creature and different from God; it gives the peculiar stand to the *ek-sistentia* of all creatures, standing between God and nothing.<sup>9</sup> Nothingness is what makes it possible to transcend Being; it makes negation itself possible—and not the contrary.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the horizon of nothingness can only be discovered by a special awareness once the tenet of creation has been accepted.<sup>11</sup> This is what makes the great distinction between mere philosophy and theological philosophy.<sup>12</sup> This same horizon of nothingness is not discovered by a "normal" functioning of the human reason, but is revealed to Man by his existential anxiety. And again, this is what makes the great distinction between a merely essential thinking and the existential philosophical attitude.<sup>13</sup> What revelation or faith does, in one case, to let us discover our nothingness, death or dread does in the other.

Nor is this all. To "create" is a transitive verb, in the theology of Semitic religions. God creates precisely because He acts out of nothing, and creation—*passive sumpta*—is the result of this act (of creation). Modern philosophical languages introduce the same kind of transitive verb for the opposite act, forcing grammar where necessary.<sup>14</sup> If it is God who creates, it is Man who "nothings," it is with Man that nothingness is being "annihilated."<sup>15</sup> Man "de-creates" precisely because he reduces things to nothing, or rather, Man is he by whom nothingness comes into this world.<sup>16</sup>

I could proceed further and give more details and coincidences, but there is no need to repeat what any student of Western philosophy and theology knows. I may instead offer some brief considerations of a morphological nature, relevant, in my opinion, to the enterprise of philosophizing in a worldwide context. Isn't this what Fritz Buri is striving for?

<sup>9</sup> Significantly enough, this idea is not only common among the Scholastics but also explicitly defended by Descartes ("Je suis comme un milieu entre l'être et le néant," "I am like a place between being and nothingness"). One could relate this traditional idea with Heidegger's assertion: "Die ontologische Differenz ist das Nicht zwischen Seiendem und Sein" [The ontological difference is that nothingness between the being (concrete thing) and Being]. St. Augustine says of that difference: "nec omnino esse, nec omnino non esse" [not absolutely being nor absolutely non-being].

<sup>10</sup> This, as is known, is a thesis common to Heidegger and Sartre.

<sup>11</sup> X. Zubiri has developed the Christian *horizonte de nihilidad* against that of the *caducidad* of the Greeks, although the Christian horizon seems to me to be one of creatureliness, i.e., an in-between (*ek-sistentia*) between God and Nothing. See the vedāntic concept of *māyā*, or this world as *sadāsatanirvacanīya*, an indefinable between Being and Nothingness.

<sup>12</sup> It is enough to recall the prolific discussion around the notion of "Christian philosophy" before the Second World War.

<sup>13</sup> See the now-classic places in Heidegger to substantiate this view.

<sup>14</sup> The neologisms *nichter* in German and *néantiser* in French are well known. Spanish does not need to introduce a new term because it has the transitive verb *anonadar* (and the astonishing word *anonadamiento*), which is not exactly equivalent to the Italian *nullificare*, from medieval Latin. The Romance languages also have derivatives from the medieval Latin *annullare*, from *annibilare*. English has to *annul*, *nullify*, and *annihilate*.

<sup>15</sup> See the well-known Sartrean expression "Le néant ne se néantise pas, il est néantisé" [nothingness does not annihilate itself, it is annihilated].

<sup>16</sup> See the Sartrean dictum "L'homme est l'être par qui le néant vient au monde."

## 2

The first caution to be observed is that the context of the speculation about nothingness in the Indic and Buddhist world is *different* from that in the Western world. Not only is the primordial stage in the oriental myths one of "neither Being nor Non-Being," as the *Rg-veda* would say, but the apophatic dimension is constitutive and perhaps the only positive feature of reality. The Real is invisible unless enlightenment illuminates it. That is why, for instance, freedom will be seen as freedom-from rather than as freedom-for: as liberation rather than liberty. Any comparative study regarding this problem in the context of an East-West dialogue should not forget the radically opposed contexts of the two traditions.

The point of contact between the East and the West is neither Plato nor Aristotle but the pre-Socratics. The empirical, that is, that which is given to the *empeiria*, that which is really experienced, perceived, gone through (as the very etymology suggests), is not what is given to the senses but what transcends them. The *given* is not the object (the objects disclosed to us by the senses), but the subject (the subjects, disclosed to us by an inversion of the flow toward the exterior, as the *Upanisads* would say). The "evident" is not what we see (in front of us, what comes on the way: the obvious) but the seer, what sees: the seeing. This word of warning may suffice here.<sup>17</sup>

Is it not also true that the contemporary speculation on nothingness would be foreign to the Hellenic mind? The primordial chaos is not nothingness, nor is the demiurge a creator out of nothing. It is the Semitic impact, and more specifically the Christian speculation, that sounds a new tune here. Time is finite and has an atemporal beginning. It touches nothingness. Nothingness in the modern sense is a Christian or perhaps a post-Christian *theologoumenon*. From the Eastern perspective, not only *ex nihilo nihil fit*,<sup>18</sup> but *nihil in nihilum cadit*.<sup>19</sup> Isn't this the law of *karman*?

Third, and finally, we detect the following scheme of thought in both cases: There is Man. Where does he come from? Where does he go? What makes him what he is? How can we know it? The one series of questions tries to direct us to Man's source and origins, to the primordial nothingness out of which he emerged by an act of creation. The other series tries to direct us in the opposite direction, to Man's end and final stage, to death, to disappearance. The deontologization of Man is found in his origin in the one instance<sup>20</sup> and, in the other, in his final stage.<sup>21</sup> Either at the beginning or at the end, "nothingness haunts being."<sup>22</sup> But the scheme of intelligibility and a certain type of formal presupposition are the same. The time factor, regarding the past in the first case, or looking toward the future in the second, is central in both cases.

The nonacceptance of the precarious human condition is also patent in both attitudes. In one case Man is "comforted" because he has come out of nothing, and thus all that he

<sup>17</sup> See the rather unfortunate discussions about whether the Eastern religions are "world-denying" in comparison with the "world-affirming" Semitic ones. It is gratuitously assumed that world equals reality, that "reality" is empirical, and that experience means sensation.

<sup>18</sup> Nothing comes out of nothing.

<sup>19</sup> Nothing comes to nothing.

<sup>20</sup> The creature "sibi autem relicta, in se considerata nihil est" [left to itself, considered in itself, is nothing], says Thomas Aquinas, echoing the entire Christian tradition.

<sup>21</sup> "*Sein zum Tode*" [being for death], either in its Heideggerian sense or in a different key, also is an expression of our nothingness at the end.

<sup>22</sup> A direct quotation from Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant*: "Le néant est postérieur à l'être. . . . Il hante l'être" [Nothingness is posterior to being. . . . It haunts being].

has is a pure gift for which he has to be thankful. Humility is the truth and thankfulness the basic human attitude. Prayer (cf. the Latin *precarius*) is Man's way toward fullness. In the other case, Man is also comforted because he has a heroic and noble destiny, that of facing death, of encountering nothingness, of overcoming dreams of unreality and escapism, thus being confronted with the unrepeatability and earnestness of the present. Authenticity and the courage "to be or not to be" are the basic values here. Refusing to pray (beg) but confronting *precariousness* (Man's questioning nature) is his way toward the exit. Time is the most sacred category. Nothingness is in both cases the ultimate "stuff" of Man: either at the beginning or at the end.

The time bias is visible in both cases, and by the same token is the difference between them. Whereas the past, the origins, the primitive revelation, the "beginning" has the primacy in the former case, in the latter the future, the end, the final eschatology plays the main role in human life. It is this temporal interpretation of creation that slowly crept into the late medieval mind, that in my opinion is at the root of the pendular reaction of modernity. Thomas Aquinas stated that reason cannot prove creation as a temporal event, and precisely for this, he affirmed that the issue is irrelevant, because the real creation is the total, constant, and constitutive dependence of all beings on Being.

This crystallized in the well-known formula that *creatio* and *conservatio* are only different *quoad nos* (in our eyes). In fact, if the human mind could find some fundamental and real difference between them, it could easily prove that creation had a beginning, for creatures then would need more than the act of God that sustains their existence in order to come to be. This idea has so surreptitiously entered the popular Christian mind that the present-day fuss between "creationists" and "evolutionists" misses the point altogether, if it is a matter of discussing a Christian tenet and not an autonomous scientific hypothesis. Now, once creation is set at a certain moment in time (against Augustine and Thomas), the *αρχη, principium*, foundation, ground, becomes a beginning, and thus calls for an end. (And those who unduly extrapolate the second principle of thermodynamics are made happy.)

If human souls, in the popular Christian belief, have a beginning and no end, all the elements are given for the inversion of the entire process, situating the zero point at the end: the modern nothingness. So the *nihil omnino in nihilum redigetur*<sup>23</sup> of Scholasticism becomes "the defiant courage to embrace nothingness."<sup>24</sup> When time becomes menacingly short in the experience of Man, because he has nothing else but a linear temporality, Modernity begins.

### 3

I am not saying that the existentialistic notion of nothingness is merely the inverse of the mainly Christian idea of creation. I am not affirming that the traditional Christian thought was only obsessed by the past and the origin, whereas the modern existentialistic thought is only worried about the future and the end. This would be an oversimplification of the whole matter.

I am trying to find out a certain trend of mind, a pattern of thought that connects these two seemingly divergent worldviews. Besides, I am suggesting that a critical approach could be elaborated from both sides, if this hypothesis were to prove useful.

<sup>23</sup> Nothing will be completely annihilated. And yet God, but only He, can *aliquid in nihilum redigere* (annihilate something).

<sup>24</sup> English translation of Buri's words describing modern nihilism.

I am also submitting that their complementarity may help us to enter into dialogue with other types of human experience and proceed by a further step in the right direction toward a more comprehensive human wisdom. I am saying that these two apparently dialectically opposed views of reality are, in fact, two species of the same genus, and that one of the advantages of a cross-cultural approach is that it helps us discover commonalities where one is only accustomed to suffer incompatibilities. In other words, what may appear as a *cavus belli* from the opposite shores of the Rhine may become a common front if seen from the banks of the Ganges.

If this hypothesis is correct, we can draw another couple of general considerations.

The first is that "zero" is not a historical category, just as in mathematics the nought is not a number. In other words, history never begins at a zero point, and human tradition can never present a radical newness or offer an absolute beginning. We cannot jump over our own shadow or totally break away from tradition. There is a deep continuity in human history and culture. The "apostolic continuity," to transpose a theological term, is not so easily broken. Man's own ancestors cannot be denied. Out of Europe or America there cannot come anything that is not influenced by and related to the past history of those continents. The Semitic impact, as well as many others of course, has entered the blood of our part of the world. There can be in the West an anti-Christian and also a post-Christian culture, but not an "a-Christian" one—for the few centuries to come.<sup>25</sup>

The methodological translation of this idea amounts to the need to incorporate the *context* of any *text* in order to understand the latter. In other words, the historical perspective is indispensable for the understanding of any cultural phenomenon.

In our particular case, we discover, first, that the Christian doctrine of creation ex nihilo is not an absolute Christian dogma, but a formulation worked out in dialogue and confrontation with the Hellenic and especially Platonic demiurge, who shapes the cosmos out of the chaos of "primal matter." The biblical doctrine would say that the Creator brings the world into existence "without a previous matter"—that is, not out of the πρωτη υλη, but "out of nothing." To have taken this idea out of its context is at the basis of more than one misunderstanding.

Similarly, in the second place, we set the modern Western conceptions of nothingness within the Christian context with which they are in dialogue and confrontation. Therefore they are neither absolute statements regarding "Being and Nothingness," nor can they be related to their homologue elements in other traditions without carrying along the Christian context that defines them.

This first point should lead us directly to a second and equally important consideration, namely the particularity of any given human tradition: none of them can represent the whole of Man's experience. This warning against any kind of imperialistic or colonialist attitude is all the more urgent as we have to counterbalance two of the most deeply rooted features of our own mind: a tendency to universalization and being unaware of our own presuppositions.

It is here that the *dialogical dialogue*, proper to the encounter of cultures, becomes more than just a specialization of some few spirits or a luxury for an elite. It is the method now becoming necessary for all human assertions, when they claim to have universal validity.

Three notions may be briefly recalled here.

First, the concept of *corrective*: it is only from another cultural background and a different context that we can detect our implicit assumptions and proceed to a critical appraisal of what a certain theory is propounding.

<sup>25</sup> See the well-known sentence of K. Jaspers: "Wir Abendländer alle sind Christen" [We all Westerners are Christians].

Second, the concept of *complementarity*: the view from another, radically different standpoint will offer us a complementary solution to a more universal state of affairs, which becomes a problem just by the very interaction of the two perspectives.

Third, the *inadequacy* of the synthesis thus achieved: if there is no "zero" in human history, there is no "infinite" either. There is no final product, no end, no consummated eschatology, no absolute position.

Let me elaborate on these three points.

As a *corrective*, the study of the modern Western problem of nothingness from another perspective, say the Buddhist one, may help us to discover the proper context within which that particular problem is meaningful. Just as the Christian theological tenet of creation out of nothing is meaningful only if by "nothing" we mean a denial of the "first matter" of Greek cosmologies, similarly, the modern idea of nothingness can be properly situated if, first, its relations with the theories of creation are kept in mind, and, second, both concepts of nothingness are interpreted against the background of another horizon such as the Buddhist one. Buddhist nothingness (if such an expression be allowed) is neither the primordial nonexistence of the created being nor the negation of existence, though obviously it is not totally unrelated to these two insights.

The Buddhist insight *complements* these other intuitions. It sets the notion of nothingness neither in a pretemporal nor in a posttemporal way. It focuses the problem, furthermore, from another perspective than that of creation, or no creation, and without the need for a revelation. It assumes that the realm of being is coextensive with that of thinking (without the need of identifying them), and thus that the apophatism of nothingness is not only epistemic and ontic but also ontologic, and therefore there is a need to speak, even negatively, only for the curious and not yet enlightened person. Nothingness here is not only unthinkable, it is also unthought: we think no-thing, and we do not think when we (think that we) "think" nothingness.

Seeing, on the other hand, the Buddhist perspective (including the claim, laid by certain Buddhist systems, of having overcome all perspectives) under the Western light, one easily discovers that it also assumes that "there is" a certain ineffable meta-ontologic structure, even beyond reality (if this is not playing with words). But this is only one of the possible options of the human spirit. In other words, the *inadequacy* of both perspectives appears clearly when they are correctly confronted on the same level of discourse or of experience, and yet nothing is said about their being true or untrue. This brings clearly to our eyes that the finitude of our factual situation allows us to make meaningful statements with the inbuilt claim to truth, but does not permit us to raise this truth to the status of an absolute truth.

\*

I have been speaking of the Western world, the Judeo-Christian and the modern world; and although I have once mentioned Islam, I have not made more explicit reference to it. Let me then conclude with a quotation from the Sufi Hasan of Basra. He says, in that coalescence of *Dichten und Denken*,<sup>26</sup> all that I have been trying to say regarding the *a quo* and *ad quem*:<sup>27</sup>

*A child was carrying a candle. I asked: "Whence comes that light?"  
He blew it out, and said: "Now tell me where it has gone!"*

<sup>26</sup> Poetry and Thought.

<sup>27</sup> Origin/goal.



## SECTION X

### THE TEXTURE OF A TEXT

#### In Response to Paul Ricoeur\*

In this response I am assuming that the shifting perspectives under discussion are those of the Western tradition, and second, that the contours of the issue have already been drawn in Paul Ricoeur's works.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

# 1

## A THESIS

My overall affirmation about the problem of the changing perspectives on the interpretation of a text amounts to saying that the change belongs both to the interpretation and to the text. In other words, the *interpretation of a text* is inseparable from the *text of the interpretation*. Text and interpretation belong together. There is not an immutable text that people first interpret as saying one thing and later, looking at the same text from another angle, discover it may also say something else. On the contrary, the interpretation is so intimately built into the text itself that it would not be accurate to say that the interpreter's perspective has changed while the text remains unchanged, although ready to receive other interpretations.

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\* In *Point of Contact* 2, no. 1 (1978): 51–64 (New York).

<sup>1</sup> This response was offered toward the end of a symposium in honor of Paul Ricoeur, "On the Interpretation of a Text," sponsored by the Institute of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, April 29–May 1, 1976.

The same thesis could also be formulated in this way: *without interpretation, there is no text*, so that the interpretation of a text belongs to the complete text. Text and interpretation should not be considered as object (or fact) and subject (or observer) respectively. The subject-object epistemology fails here, as elsewhere, to provide us with a valid tool for understanding this central hermeneutic problem.

What I am contesting here is the application of the physical-chemical method of analysis to a text. What I am reacting against is the mirage that the natural sciences may accomplish the philosophical enterprise of reaching intelligibility. To understand a text, we do not apply different tests and reactors, and observe how the stuff reacts. Understanding a text is not like analyzing a chemical substance. It is not we alone who shift perspectives; the text itself undergoes a change when we approach it differently. A text is not a dead physical substance with which we can experiment or that we can manipulate *ad libitum*. A text is only a text when it is interwoven with the texture in which we live and understand.

In order to explain and hopefully elucidate this thesis, I first examine some moments in the evolution of Western hermeneutics; and I shall submit, in the second place, some *sūtra*-like statements regarding some of the threads that constitute the texture of a text.

## THREE HERMENEUTIC MOMENTS (*TRYARTA*)

In analyzing the shifting Western hermeneutic perspective over the past few centuries, some words of Thomas Aquinas come to my mind that could serve as the motto for this presentation:

Studium philosophiae non est ad hoc ut sciatur quidquid homines senserint, sed qualiter se habeat veritas rerum.<sup>1</sup>

Although I maintain that this shift in perspective has been a continuous movement along a slope, for heuristic purposes, I describe this process by focusing on three moments of special importance. They are three kairological moments, often chronologically interwoven.<sup>2</sup> I am not referring, of course, to the many possible interpretations of a text, like the four traditional meanings of Scripture, for instance,<sup>3</sup> but to the different conceptions of the interpretation of a text.

The first moment embodies the belief that we can discover the *veritas rerum* by properly examining the *res*. So, when it is a question of knowing the meaning of a text, we believe we can reach the truth through an objective and dispassionate interpretation. To be sure, the *veritas rerum* of, say, the *Odyssey* or the Bible was also tied to the understanding of the text as this has been handed down by an authoritative tradition. The *res* of a text may also be its context. But, in any case, we have a *veritas rerum* that will yield itself to our knowledge when properly approached. Interpretation means deciphering, decoding—be it the book of Nature, or that of God, or those of Men.

The second moment finds its expression in the belief that the real truth, the *veritas rerum*, of a text in our case, does not lie in a hypothetical textual objectivity, but precisely in *quidquid homines senserint*, that is, in human consciousness itself. To be sure, this second moment does not stand for mere arbitrariness, so that any text could have any meaning, but it stresses, to different degrees, that any reading of a text equally entails a reading *into* the text. We have witnessed the unfolding of the subjective aspect of knowledge in the complex analyses of philosophers from Kant to Hegel, and down to Husserl.

<sup>1</sup> *De coelo* II.3: "The study of philosophy does not aim at making us know everything that Men perceive, but the truth of things."

<sup>2</sup> It is obvious that I cannot offer here a detailed study of the evolution of hermeneutics.

<sup>3</sup> See the well-known Christian Scholastic verses: "*Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, / moralis quid agas, / quo tendas anagogia*" [the literal sense teaches the events; allegory, what to believe; moral, what to do; anagogy, the goal]; or also the *sapta bhangī*, the seven senses or meanings that any statement can have, according to the jaina *svādviśā*.

The *third* moment consists in believing that the true interpretation of a state of affairs does not lie either in a *veritas rerum* or a *hominum sensus* but somewhere in between, namely in the very speaking language itself, which refuses either to be objectified in a naively realistic world or subjectified in a naively idealistic consciousness. Language is neither a mental construct only, nor exclusively an extra-mental reality. A purely objective language is essentially referential, and implies a *speaker* as much as the *spoken* thing ("contents")—besides the *speech* itself.

Let us look at these moments a little more closely. I repeat that the three moments are not merely sequential, and that none of them can be totally set apart from the others, each being potentially present, as it were, in the other two.

The first moment stresses objectivity and has a kind of "original innocence" in its belief that truth "shines out of itself," provided we keep both ourselves (mainly our reason) clean from impurities (like passions or crooked intentions) and the object free from superstructures and additions. Text or source criticism offers a good example of this procedure.

The second moment stresses subjectivity and presents a kind of fascinating sophistification by making us aware that we are not independent of, or apart from, the object to be interpreted. It is reinforced when the failures of the first moment appear so blatant to make it impossible for us to believe that the erroneous interpretations were merely due to technical mistakes. The belief in an *objective interpretation* was shattered by the common experience and growing awareness—especially when the medieval Christian myth (qua myth) began to break down—that, despite every proviso and cautionary rule for sober analysis, even the best minds held the most disparate opinions. Where then was truth to be found? The theory of literary genres and form criticism offers here a good example.

In this search for a correct interpretation, and ultimately for truth, the Western world followed divergent paths. Some pursued an increasingly pure objectivity and neglected the observer, by emphasizing observation and experiment. Thus the natural sciences and the scientific method came to the forefront. Others scrutinized the observer and directed their efforts toward regaining indisputable truth through a deeper analysis of the rational condition for evidence. The role of the mind and the power of reason were underscored, and so "modern philosophy" was born.

Given such different directions, little wonder that the hiatus between these paths grew to such enormous proportions: it was soon *Naturwissenschaften* (natural sciences) versus *Geisteswissenschaften* (spiritual sciences, i.e., humanities).

Now, these two branches of human knowledge have in common only what by then had become an archaic concept of *scientia*. *Naturwissenschaften* wanted to explain. *Geisteswissenschaften* wanted to understand. The former was directed toward the *veritas rerum*, the latter toward *quidquid homines senserint*. Yet not only were the "objectives" different, the subjects were also at odds; the story of the attraction exerted by science over philosophy is an instructive chapter in the history of human thought.<sup>4</sup> To be sure, philosophy did not merely surrender truth to science: Romanticism and idealism both described themselves by using the famous image of Lessing: "If God held all truth in His right hand, and in His left the everlasting search for it, . . . I would choose the latter."<sup>5</sup> It should be added that this kind of truth that "God may have in his hand" was a frozen, dogmatic, and ultimately inaccessible truth. (No wonder that it was declared to be sour, like the grapes in the famous Indo-European tale.) And since no one can reach "objective" truth, Man must remain within the bounds of

<sup>4</sup> See my chapter on the evolution of the concept of science in *Ontonomía de la ciencia* (Madrid, 1961), 33–85.

<sup>5</sup> In *Eine Duplik* (1778).

eidetic intuition; the *noémata* must suffice. As for all the rest of the human (even theoretical) problems, pragmatism remains the only valid criterion for truth.

Even granting that philosophers may have the tools to understand the words, now, after the success of modern science, Man realizes that pure reason and disincarnated knowledge are powerless to elicit any change in the world. What is the use of interpreting the world, if the understanding thus gained remains barren and ineffective? Is there still any place for philosophy? Certainly, philosophy cannot renounce to criticize its own assumptions and analyze, as far as possible, its own presuppositions.<sup>6</sup> What then is the use of philosophical speculation?

Philosophy was at its lowest ebb when it had to hear that interpreting the world was, at best, an irrelevant amusement. One can understand the success of Marx and the shift toward science and technology. Unless interpretation is seen as *action*, meaningful and powerful, there is no place for philosophy as a merely passive mirroring of the world.

We are, by this, at the threshold of the third moment.

This moment marks a turning point in Western culture. Once again, the historical initiative came from the natural sciences as they began to discover that the observer modifies the observation, and ultimately forms a part of it.<sup>7</sup>

Philosophy, then, reenters the arena by overcoming its noetical obsession of serving as a bridge between reality (being) and idea (consciousness), yet without abandoning its function of striving for ultimate intelligibility. It discovers that to understand—like to measure—is to change the "understood"; and that to interpret—like to experiment—is more than merely to reflect the *veritas rerum* or the *hominum sensus*. It is to change and steer the Real, and precisely from within. The problem is complex, and the danger of identifying philosophy with ideology becomes acute to the extent that philosophy tends to forget its relative position to its particular historical situation, and attempts to shape reality from the fickle platform where it contingently stands.<sup>8</sup> Be that as it may, interpretation becomes hermeneutics, not as a mere technique or pure method, but as philosophy. This turning of attention (*die hermeneutische Kehr*) is directed neither to the analysis of states of consciousness (mind, *noémata*, ideas), nor to "hard" facts and objective situations, but to language. By now, Gadamer's words are familiar: "Sein das verstanden werden kann ist Sprache" (language is Being letting itself be understood).<sup>9</sup> Less known, perhaps, are those of Ortega y Gasset, who, almost half a century earlier, said that language is precisely "that into which Being is translated."

Language is not a mere tool for the use of the speaker in understanding or changing the world. It also is Man and World. In this sense, the analysis of language is as much anthropology as linguistics—just as theology cannot be severed from anthropology. But anthropology here means more than science of the "two-legged non-winged animal";<sup>10</sup> it means the study of

<sup>6</sup> By "assumptions" I mean the conscious principles, or axioms, on which we base our philosophy; and by "presuppositions" those principles, or myths, that we take so much for granted that we are not even aware of them—until others point them out to us; then they become assumptions, if we accept them as such.

<sup>7</sup> I have argued that this is also the case with thinking, so that, just as there is no pure observation, there is no pure thinking either. Both modify the "object" of observation or of thought, each in its own peculiar way.

<sup>8</sup> See my contribution to the Castelli Symposium (Roma, 1973), "Tolérance, idéologie et mythe," then published in *Demythisation et idéologie* (Paris, 1973), 191–206.

<sup>9</sup> *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1960), Foreword, xxii.

<sup>10</sup> An Aristotelian definition.

that pole of reality that we cannot get rid of, despite the fact that it might not be the center of the universe. Even more, the study of language has a theological, an anthropological, and also a cosmological dimension, so that a comprehensive science of language cannot ignore the physical, the intellectual, and the supra-intellectual or *mysteric* aspects of the world.<sup>11</sup>

Be this as it may, our problem is only that of the interpretation. In fact, if interpretation is the process (by which we proceed) toward awareness when we are confronted with an initially opaque message, it is in this very process that we assimilate, grow, and become. This is why, ultimately, the interpreted "thing" belongs to the interpretation and why understanding implies involvement and "interest" as much as distance and dispassionateness.

Here again, language is the key. Putting it differently: hermeneutics and language belong together. Not only there is no hermeneutics without language, there is also no language without hermeneutics. We have here a more radical fact than the so-called hermeneutic circle between the part and the whole.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, the function of hermeneutics consists in letting language convey what it says, that is, letting language be language; hermeneutics is always an interpretation of language. On the other hand, language is only language when it says something, that is, when it is interpreted and understood (by somebody and sometime, at least). Hermeneutics uses language in order to interpret language; language is just an interpretation of what language itself wants to say. At the final stage, language and interpretation coalesce. We could call this "the linguistic circle."<sup>13</sup>

Language itself is only language when it says something, that is, when it speaks. And in order to speak, it must be spoken to or for somebody. Without a concomitant interpretation, without the inverse reenactment of the listener, the speaker is not a speaker. Translation is only an extreme case of interpretation: any language is language because it carries within it the power of saying something. But the *saying* exists only if it is *said*, that is, if it falls on fertile ground<sup>14</sup> where it is interpreted, translated, and in one way or another, understood.

This third moment has discovered that an unbridgeable dichotomy between *veritas rerum* and *quidquid homines senserint* would be false. *Alétheia* (truth) is not only "out there" but also "in here." We might remember that the Sanskrit word *satya* means both truth and being, or more accurately: truth (*satya*) is the substantivized form of being (*sat*), not vice versa! Language is neither purely objective nor merely subjective. Language is neither a mere speaking box nor simply concepts, ideas, or states of consciousness subsistent in themselves without reference to an extra-mental reality. Language itself is already extra-mental. Incidentally, the expression "extralinguisticality" (which has been used extensively during this symposium) is misleading when understood in the context of the controversy between idealism and realism. Language is always intrinsically "extralinguistic," both in its term *a quo* and *ad quem*.

Here, in my opinion, we should set the contribution and ambitious project of Paul Ricoeur: to build "a hermeneutic arch" between *explaining* and *interpreting*. It is also here where his studies on *metaphor* become extremely important.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., the *Vedic* texts on *vac* (the word) and the biblical statements on *logos*, with the respective traditional speculations.

<sup>12</sup> No part of a word, let alone a sentence or an entire work, fact, etc., can be understood unless the whole is somewhat grasped, and vice versa—a puzzling fact since the time of the ancient Indic grammarians.

<sup>13</sup> Here is where the Indic speculation on the nature of the *Vedas* and of grammar becomes extremely relevant for the contemporary reflection on language. But I have here confined myself to the Western situation.

<sup>14</sup> See Mt 13:23.

But the arc is huge, and the way long. It needs many pillars. Please let me make a brief excursus on one such pillar-builder before some final reflections. I just want to mention a forerunner in this field, who has been unaccountably neglected: Ortega y Gasset. He was situated neither in the post-Cartesian line of Western philosophy nor in a merely "German" reaction against rationalism. He saw the power of the metaphor and the function of language as a mediator between subject and object. He himself had "el don de la palabra" in a double sense: the power of speech and the gift of language. He saw that language might give us the clue for the excruciating problem of realism and idealism. But my parenthetical remark refers only to his profound intuitions concerning the nature of metaphor. He begins one of his essays on metaphor saying,

"Cuando un escritor censura el uso de metáforas en filosofía, revela simplemente su desconocimiento de lo que es filosofía y de lo que es metáfora."<sup>15</sup>

It may be enough to quote some of his lapidary sentences: "La poesía es hoy el álgebra superior de las metáforas,"<sup>16</sup> "La metáfora es probablemente la potencia más fértil que el hombre posee,"<sup>17</sup> "Cada metáfora es el descubrimiento de una ley del universo,"<sup>18</sup> "Una injustificada desatención por parte de los hombres científicos mantiene la metáfora todavía en situación de *terra incognita*,"<sup>19</sup> "... este objeto que se transparenta a sí mismo, el objeto estético, encuentra su forma elemental en la metáfora. Yo diría que objeto estético y objeto metafórico son una misma cosa, o bien, que la metáfora es el objeto estético elemental, la célula bella."<sup>20</sup>

Or again in 1914, Don José quotes the Italian poet Giosuè Carducci: "E già che la metafora, regina / di nascita e conquista, / e la sola gentil, salda, divina / verità che sussista."<sup>21</sup>

I close now this parenthesis and would like to submit some reflections on our common subject: the shifting perspectives on the interpretation of a text.

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<sup>15</sup> "When a writer finds fault in the use of the metaphor in philosophy, he simply betrays his ignorance of both what philosophy is and what metaphor is," in *Las dos grandes metáforas* (1924).

<sup>16</sup> "Poetry is today the advanced algebra of metaphors," in *La deshumanización del arte* (1925).

<sup>17</sup> "The most fruitful capacity Man has is probably metaphor" (*ibid.*).

<sup>18</sup> "Each metaphor is the discovery of a law of the universe," in *La metáfora* (1914).

<sup>19</sup> "An unjustified neglect of metaphor by scientists keeps it in the condition of an unknown land" (*ibid.*).

<sup>20</sup> "This self-transparent object, i.e., the aesthetic object, finds its elementary form in metaphor. I would say that aesthetic object and metaphoric object are one and the same; or even that the metaphor is the elementary aesthetic object, the cell of beauty" (*ibid.*).

<sup>21</sup> "For the metaphor, queen / by birth and conquest, / and the only gentle, solid, divine / truth that endures" (*ibid.*).

## 3

## THE FIVE THREADS OF A TEXT (PANCASŪTRA)

### A Text Is Word Crystallized in Matter, Space, Time, and Man

This first *sūtra* (thread) links text with Man. Traditionally, a text was understood as a substitute for the spoken word. Today we agree that it is more than just "ersatz" speech. The written word has a justification *sui stante*. The spoken and the written words, however, cannot be so divorced that the latter become totally independent of the former. Both belong together as two forms of language. Man is a speaking being, but his speech is more than just an act of the moment, and it can remain as a crystallized word "after" or "outside" the actual speaking. Generally this crystallization takes place in written documents, which then become separated from the speaking individual in space and through time. The word becomes then "inworded" in matter. Consequently, the hermeneutic effort has concentrated on decoding the meaning enshrined in the documents and bridging the spatial and temporal gaps in order to bring about an understanding for the *hic et nunc*.

But what has been somehow neglected hitherto is the fact that a text is a word that also crystallizes in Man qua Man. The word becomes "inworded" in Man. Man himself is a kind of document: he bears within him, like a living library, a fantastic amount of crystallized language, not only in his memory, but also in the circumstances of his historical existence. Historical Man has been *impressed* by the words of his predecessors. Cultural Man is himself a written document, a living text. He learns how to *express* himself out of the *impression* he has received.

### A Text "Says"

This second *sūtra* links text with word.

Man speaks, but a text "says." A text is not just a book or an engraved stone or a coded document of some sort. A text has more than just a body. On the other hand, it is also a body, it is more than just improvisation; it does not merely consist of reading from a blank page nor of an arbitrary interpretation according to one's private whims. There is no text without a material being, a carrier of the text, a "sub-stance" (something supporting it from below). But neither is there a text without an intelligent or spiritual being who reacts to the document and reads it.

A nonsaying text is not a text. An undeciphered script or an untranslated document is not a text for those who cannot read or understand it. A text is a text only insofar as this inner relation between the document and the reader is maintained. A text is culture and history in a very special way. Only Man is a speaking being, but a text also is a saying reality. A text is not just an artifact, a tool, a dead product of Man's spirit. A text—in the integral sense I am taking it—is a real embodiment of Man's spirit: it transcends human individuality without ceasing to be human. A text says just as a Man speaks. But *what* does a text say?

### A Text Says What It Means

This third *sūtra* links text with meaning. Unless a text says something, there is no text. But a text can say many things; it may have many meanings. Every text is *polysemous*. This may, perhaps, give us a clue for the fundamental distinction between the oral and the written word: the spoken word may say what its speaker intends if its speaker explicitly reduces the field of meaning to only what he or she wants the word to mean, and we understand and accept this restriction. But this is not the case with a written text. Once a text is removed from its author, the latter no longer has any authority to restrict its meaning in accordance with his or her wishes: *scripta manent*. A text not only says what its author decrees it to say, but it also says what *it means*—that is, the meaning it is capable of conveying.

Even if its author should write down the restrictive meaning of his words, nobody, first of all, would be obliged to accept that restriction, and second, the very words by which he states his restrictions would already form another text, which can be interpreted differently.

Polysemy, however, does not mean a chaotic anarchy of meanings. There seem to be three basic meanings of a text.

*First*: the text says what its author wanted it to mean. A text has a first object, that is, the “objective” of its author, the subject matter given by its author. A text is an objective reality; something that its author has thrown before himself (this is the etymological sense of *ob-iectum*) and shaped in the form of a text. The first rule of exegesis is to understand what the maker of a text wanted to do with it: the subjective meaning of the author. Sometimes this is called the “literal meaning,” but the expression is misleading, for the author may intend something different than the always problematic and equally elusive “plain meaning” of the words.

*Second and third*: a text says more than what its author intended (some people have even said that a text does not only say more than the author intended, but also better). A text is an independent entity, which may convey many other significations than those intended by its author. A text is inserted in a context and depends on it. In a certain way, and paradoxically enough, the meaning of a text does not depend so much on the authority of its author’s will as on the context of both its maker and the text itself. Let us call the context or *Lebenswelt* of its maker the *circumstance*, and the context of the text itself its *situation*. The authority of the *Odyssey* or of the *Divine Comedy* does not rest on Homer or Dante exclusively, but on the entire context of each poem, which has placed them at the center of a particular human tradition. The “circumstances” of Homer and Dante—that is, their worlds—must somehow be incorporated into the full text, but also the “situations” of the two poems, that is, their own particular *Sitz im Leben* must be taken into consideration for understanding the works in question. The circumstance of the author, his *Lebenswelt*, and the situation of the work (text), its *Umwelt*, both belong to the context.

Now, an important distinction has to be made between reading and interpreting. By “reading” I mean the (at least) mental recitation of the set of signs forming a text. By “interpretation” I mean that which leads to the understanding of the text. We read a text by reenacting the set of signs according to the clues furnished by its particular language. We interpret a text by putting it against a context and extracting its meaning. We do not “read” a context; otherwise, by definition, it would become a text. Now, we interpret a text when the situation and the circumstance allow us to understand the text by setting it in an intelligible field, and thus converting the document into a living text. The context as such is not objectifiable but is somehow inseparable from the text. It provides the text with a surrounding space, which enables the text to have at least one interpretation.

What I have called the "situation" of a text has generally not been distinguished from its "circumstance." I submit that this distinction is founded on the nature of a text itself, although it should not be converted into a total separation. Both situation and circumstance belong to the context. The circumstance is formed by the original world of the text within the mind of its maker, and most especially by the entire world of the author. The situation refers to the proper world of the text since its birth to the series of universes of discourse that tradition has extracted from, or injected into, the original text.

I would like to add a few remarks regarding the situation of the text itself. The text says more than its author actually says because the text itself says what it says from the very treasure of words and sentences it contains. This context, further, mixes with the world of the readers, who unavoidably approach it from their own perspectives. Language, unlike ciphers and mere signs, is in constant flux, like Man himself, like any living creature, like Life and Being. One can fix a sign; one cannot fix a language: it would die.

Now we have three elements: the *document* proper and its context, which we have divided into the *situation* of the text and the *circumstance* of the author. The genealogical documents of the Bible, for instance, speak of the age of the individual Patriarchs, and thus indirectly of the world. The knowledge of the circumstance of the author or authors of the Bible makes us wonder if they meant to say that, from the creation of Man until Christ, only four thousand years had elapsed. But the situation of the text, that is, the stream of thought in which it is set, tells us that those documents have often, in fact, been interpreted as conveying an exact reckoning of Man's age on the planet. Yet hardly any interpreter today would think that the text gives us a scientific chronology of Man. On the contrary, modern exegesis will find another interpretation, and give good reasons for it. It is here that the line of interpreters constitutes an interpreting community that becomes part of the context and enters into the meaning of a particular text. But although we cannot ignore the complex situation of a text, a valid interpretation of a text may overlook some situations and strengthen others, due to the particular circumstance of the interpreter. In so many words, the interpretation, although bound to traditions, has a degree of freedom of its own, as we will see. A text, as a set of crystallized words, has the character of a sacrament: it works *ex opere operato*.

We need, then, a fourth element to make a text. I call it the *texture*. Only when the interpretation encompasses both the given text and the world of the reader, so that both share the same universe, only then does the document become a living text with an impact on the reader, an influence that leads to assimilation or reflection; only then have we a real text in front of us. This set of relations between the text and the reader is what I have called the texture of the text—that is, the loom composed of the interrelation between the written document and the reading people. The reading community forms the tradition of the text. And this tradition is enriched or enlarged by the hermeneutic effort of the readers.

This leads us to the *third* meaning of a text, and our fourth *sūtra*.

### A Text Means Whatever Meaning Can Be Extracted from It

This fourth *sūtra* links the text with our present human life.

I said that the *first* meaning of a text is given by the interpretation of what its author wanted to say; that the *second* meaning is won by the interpretation of what its contemporaries and our predecessors understood (and there are synchronies of many sorts); and that the *third* meaning is acquired by the sense that the text makes to us (and there are diachronies of many sorts). If the first meaning could be called "literal" and the second relies on the

circumstances of the author, qualified by the situation of the text, the third one derives from the entire texture.

We understand a text not just by reading it, but by struggling with it. A proper interpretation demands not only that the text be read, but also that it is questioned—in the double sense of the word: (a) it wants to be asked what it has to say, to be crushed and squeezed, so to speak, in order that it might yield its last drop of meaning; but also (b) to be put to the test, to be called into question, critically examined, doubted, checked. This double questioning works in two directions: we question the text and allow the text to question us.

It is with regard to this wrestling with a text that I maintain that a text has whatever meaning *can* be extracted from it. Now, this *can* is not arbitrary. Some meanings simply cannot be extracted from a given text. Each text has its own consistency and offers its own resistance; it cannot be manipulated at will. Yet there are creative moments when the proper questioning of a text yields a meaning that until then was not present in the text. Creative hermeneutics is already considered a proper phase of hermeneutics.

The intercourse with a text and the extricating of new potentialities can perhaps be exemplified by the art of translation. If, on the one hand, "traduttore, traditore" (translator, traitor), on the other hand, every true translator is a re-creator. A chemically pure translation—that is, a version in another language, of the very same intuition of the original text would be either impossible or unintelligible. A translator makes the original intelligible precisely because he makes the text meaningful within another set of references. He creates a new texture between the document and the new readers that enables them to understand the text. A good translation has to be close to the original, but, if the distance were zero, it would destroy the translation. This distance gives a special relief to the text. Whoever has read the New Testament, for instance, in more than one language, will immediately understand what I mean: each language gives new shades of meaning, and although many of them would certainly not be in the "original," nevertheless they enrich the text by enlarging its texture.

The meaning of a text, then, is revealed through a double movement on the part of the reader, testing and contesting the text: a passive movement of contemplation, understanding, assimilation, and an active dynamism of action, working, struggling with the text. We *do* something with a text and thereby the text triggers, as it were, concealed potentialities; it leads to action, becomes a work—a *leitourgia*, an "act of the people."

In other words, the text serves to orient the reader. Now, the Orient—where the sun of intelligibility dawns—is always just beyond the horizon. Can we say something about it?

### The Meaning of a Text Emerges from an Ever-Elusive Horizon

This fifth *sūtra* links the text with *mythos*.

The meaning of a text is the result of the interaction between the document, its circumstance, and its situation, which form (in each case) the particular texture that vouches for the particular intelligibility of the text. Now, this interaction is ultimately free. Here is the place for the creative spirit, as well as the locus of *mythos*.

There are, to be sure, many laws we would formulate regarding this interaction. The texture, in any given time, is as much conditioned as our own personalities are by the innumerable factors that shape our being. Yet the final step for the intelligibility of any text dawns only over an unquestioned horizon. This horizon is ever changing, ever elusive, and in a way, ever moving with the winds of the spirit. It constitutes the *mythos* of any given culture. We understand something by referring it to an accepted and somewhat transparent point of reference: our living myths.

We made a distinction earlier between reading and interpreting: we *read* a document, we *interpret* a text. We read what is written down; we interpret by converting the given text into a texture in which we are involved. This process of understanding is formed by the inextricable interaction between the document and the context. We read a text only when we "co-read" the context so as to form our texture. This co-reading, or rather "lecturing" in the sense of "selecting" is where the entire art of interpretation lies.

We cannot treat the context like a document. The context is the proper *mythos*. But each time we become aware of some context, we convert it into a part of the given text, and somebody else (perhaps ourselves at a later stage) will discover the proper context of our horizon. There is a constant movement between *mythos* and *logos*. There is no demythologization proper but only an ongoing transmythologization.<sup>1</sup>

Nobody can control this double movement from *mythos* to *logos* and from *logos* to *mythos*. It is, however, the privilege of the original thinker, the creative artist, or the stroke of genius to modify that dynamism of horizons.

Just one example. It is beyond doubt that most religious traditions of the world have believed and explicitly declared that only a very small minority of individuals would reach salvation, liberation, or the goal set by the standards of their respective traditions. It is thus a sign of the decisive force of *mythos* when we read so many modern essays trying to "prove" that the New Testament had a more "liberal" attitude, more in consonance with our contemporary democratic feelings. And yet, nothing seems clearer than the fact that the Christian Scriptures and their believers down the ages say and repeat that only few are saved. Scriptures did not say that hell is an exception, and yet they may say it, if we learn to read them differently.

We can legitimately and correctly interpret the Christian message in a different vein without the need of justifying that the New Testament "taught" or the Christians of past ages understood *our* liberal views—which they never even dreamed of. The burden of interpretation lies on the new interpreters, indeed, but they should not make their burden heavier by wanting also to incorporate the opinions of their forefathers into their (new) interpretation. The continuity of a text is an existential and wholly human continuity, not a merely doctrinal unfolding. Hermeneutics means interpretation, but to interpret is not just to have a document undergo some acid test and observe how it reacts, but to struggle with it, so that we change as much as the document itself, thus becoming a living *text*. "The letter killeth."<sup>2</sup>

In our time of collision of horizons and frantic changes, the scene is often covered by thick pollution. It is only to his merit that Paul Ricoeur has managed to dispel some of the clouds.

<sup>1</sup> See my paper "Die Unmythologisierung in der Begegnung des Christentums mit dem Hinduismus," *Kerygma und Mythos* 6, no. 1 (1963): 211–35.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor 3:6.

## SECTION XI

### THE PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION\*

*Ορθῶς δέχει καὶ τὸ καλεῖσθαι τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμην τῆς ἀληθείας*  
*It is certainly also proper that philosophy is called the science of truth.*

Aristotle, Metaphysics II.1 (993b19–20) (†)

\* \* \*

### INTRODUCTION

The modern world presents among other features two antithetical characters. On the one hand there is the apogee of science and technology. The prestige of these two cultural products has been enhanced by their success in technically "unifying" a great part of the world. On the other hand this very success has brought into closer contact the different "philosophies" of the peoples of the earth. And it is this very contact that makes it almost necessary to call into question the very foundations of the technological civilization. This fact, among others, makes imperative for our times a fundamental reflection on the nature and function of philosophy throughout human history.<sup>1</sup> Just to give some examples: seen

\* In *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist, 1979; reprint Bangalore: ATC, 1983), chap. 12.

† See Thomas Aquinas's commentary: "Nam ille videtur sapientiae amator qui sapientiam non propter aliud sed propter seipsam quaerit. Qui enim aliquid propter alterum quaerit, magis hoc amat propter quod quaerit, quam quod quaerit." [That man seems to be a lover of wisdom who seeks wisdom, not for some other reason, but for itself alone. For he who seeks one thing on account of something else, has greater love for that on whose account he seeks than for that which he seeks.]. (*In Metaphys. Lect. 3*, n.56).

<sup>1</sup> See the chapter "Necesidad de una nueva orientación de la filosofía india," in R. Panikkar, *Misterio y Revelación* (Madrid: Marova, 1971), 51–82.

from a cross-cultural perspective, the Cartesian conception of philosophy is likely to appear one-sided, the Marxist corrective biased, and the Vedantic idea insufficient.

The following pages do not intend a phenomenological diagnosis on the state of philosophy today. They attempt a rather philosophical prognosis based on the analysis of the different conceptions of philosophy throughout the long history of that human activity that is generally covered by this name.

## THE FOUR KAIROLOGICAL MOMENTS OF PHILOSOPHY

First of all, I would like to consider dividing philosophy (and not just the history of philosophy) into four periods. These four periods are not meant strictly as chronological ages, since they are not unequivocally fixed in linear time; they mutually permeate one another, and yet each is borne by its predecessor. We are speaking rather of *kairological moments* in the self-understanding of philosophy itself.

### The Religious

We may call the first philosophical period the *religious epoch*: in both East and West, philosophy began as the intellectual dimension of religion. Philosophy was not the servant of religion, but neither was it a thing apart. Philosophy was religion "philosophically" seen, that is, intellectually presented and eventually evaluated. In this context, philosophy is sacred: It brings peace and joy; it is wisdom and preparation for death, the recognition of a gracious divinity, the blessed life. Philosophy is not the handmaiden of religion, but she belongs, as it were, to the household of religion. Philosophy is part of religion; it is religion insofar as it perceives itself and attempts to express itself intellectually. At the beginning of every tradition, philosophy stood in this intimacy with religion. Philosophy in this first era understands itself as working out the right model people should have; it sees itself as the principle, the linguistic expression of religion. Philosophy is religion as it finds expression in propositions, for it is born the moment religious Man begins to reflect on his experiences and tries to formulate them.

### The Metaphysical

From this first period in philosophy a second era followed, which could be called the *metaphysical*. Man becomes the spectator of reality; he wants to gaze upon the whole. For this, however, he needs an objective distance; he must take a step backward in order to distance the thing from religion. He wants to see reality, regard it: vision, contemplation, Greek clarity, objectivity—all these ideas characterize the attitude of this period. Philosophy is metaphysics; it does not want to be the model, but the mirror of reality. It "speculates," its task is not to bring salvation directly, but to see and show objective reality.

Since Plato and Aristotle we are accustomed to repeat in the West that the beginning of philosophy lies in astonishment: *thaumazein*. It is significant that in Indian philosophy, disillusion and not astonishment is said to be the beginning of philosophical activity. Man is disillusioned by reality as it appears to him; sorrow and death, two fundamental phenomena of human experience, do not let him deceive himself about ultimate reality.

But in the final analysis, the fundamental attitude—the spectator's objectivity—is the same in both traditions whether one is disappointed or astonished that things are not what we think they are. Our thinking had led us to different expectations. The tension and the rupture between thinking and being appear. Objectivity is philosophy's focal concern, and this presupposes a tension, a rupture. The tension arises precisely because one expected something other than what is, to one's astonishment or one's disillusion. This rupture, this original dissension, on the one hand is caused by philosophy, and on the other, philosophy also claims to mend it. It is philosophy's fate to alienate Man from his environment—for it makes him aware of his distance from it—and at the same time philosophy offers Man the possibility of overcoming this alienation. Philosophical awareness makes us conscious of reality at the price of differentiating us from it, and simultaneously it offers to reunite us with the real.

Philosophy here is not the principle or the expression of religion, but its surrogate—good or bad according to different views. Religion is for the common folk; philosophy true religiousness. The metaphysicians who know the causes no longer need religion because they have "sublimed" it in their knowledge. Philosophy qua philosophy has saving or liberating power. The mirror reveals the real.

### The Epistemological

The third era of philosophy—which in the modern West certainly attained its first unequivocal expression with Descartes, but whose beginnings we find already with Socrates in Greece and Yajñavalkya in India—represents the epistemological phase of philosophy. It is certainly necessary to know the objective world; further, as the second period illustrates, intuition and contemplation are doubtless essential to intellectual life. Yet the metaphysical view contained an assumption that it did not consider: Man's knowledge of his knowledge. In this period when Man discovers himself as knower he becomes aware of both the strength and weakness of his ability to know. Here only such a critical philosophy is considered genuine; everything else is dogmatic slumber. Philosophy no longer mirrors reality but discovers itself as the inner soul of reality. In the preceding period either being or reality is the chief category; here truth stands at the center. This era discovers hitherto unexpected dimensions of subjectivity: The individual is born. One feels constrained to analyze everything, to penetrate everything with reflection. Consciousness becomes self-consciousness, philosophy becomes aware of its assumptions, it wants more than merely to know the objective thing, it wants to catch the knowing subject in the act of reflection.

If during the second era philosophy is the mirror of reality and a surrogate for religion, in this third era it opposes itself to religion, and claims that it is itself the inner soul of reality. It discovers truth as at once the bridge to reality and a part of that same reality.

### The Pragmatic or Historical

The fourth era, or dimension—I repeat, they all constantly interpenetrate and each period bears within itself the preceding one—is what we can call the pragmatic or perhaps the historical period. Here the matter at hand is not so much to know the world but to control it, to rule over it, remodel and transform it: to re-create it or, at least, to make it better. The ideal is action; mankind is understood as a historical collective. Philosophy is not only a discovery but a creation and a formation in which the historical factor

plays an important role. Reality must be reshaped as philosophy dictates: it is reality that imitates philosophy, so to speak. This era claims totally to overcome religion as a guiding principle.

### Summing Up

The four fundamental attitudes of philosophy:

1. The ecstatic dimension: the ideal is the holy Man, reality is itself sacred, the religious dimension prevails.
2. The Gnostic dimension: reality must be looked at, discovered, and contemplated, the philosopher is the Man who takes a step backward and is aware of the thing.
3. Philosophy as subjectivity: Man as individual, knowledge as self-knowledge, pure philosophy as the self-grounding of philosophy.
4. Action stands at the center; reality, even being, is historical, unfolds itself, is changeable, dynamic

A glance at any contemporary philosophical congress shows clearly that all four attitudes are represented and even clash.<sup>1</sup>

To summarize this first part I would like to tell a little story:<sup>2</sup> A young man holds a letter in his hand, lamenting, tears in his eyes: "For two years I have written faithfully every day to my fiancé. Now, she writes that she is going to marry the postman!"

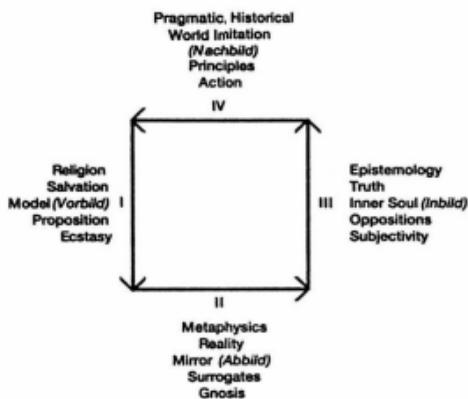
Just this has often befallen philosophy in the course of its history. When it found itself no longer in immediate contact with reality, it delivered itself constantly to the intermediary (the postman), and finally married the *logos*. Philosophy, which began with such sublime claims-seeking to bring salvation and to save humanity—has directed its attention so exclusively to the intermediary that it is no wonder that after millennia of daily trafficking in letters, it has finally married the bearer of the news about reality, the *logos*. Today philosophy is concerned almost exclusively with the *logos* (which to be sure includes not only reason but intellect as well).

In other words, we have deified the *logos* and have forgotten the cult, the game, the dance, the myth, and the rite. Apparently, all these have nothing to do with philosophy. Theologians have spoken of the *verbum dei* and regarded this *verbum dei* as God (although they add in parentheses that this *verbum* is the Son of God). Metaphysicians have constructed the *verbum entis*, and this *verbum entis* is understood as being (which was not infrequently also deified). The epistemologists were concerned with the *verbum mentis*; this *verbum mentis* is philosophy's final criterion for determining truth. Later philosophers made the *verbum mundi* the starting point, and the philosophers of science, along with the modern language philosophers, avow the *verbum hominis* as the ultimate. But we have not only forgotten being, we have ignored myths as well, and this carelessness has also affected the *pneuma*. Needless to say, we are summarizing all this in a very concentrated way.

<sup>1</sup> A few citations from the various resolutions distributed during the XIV International Congress held in Vienna in 1968 might illustrate this collision. For instance: "Philosophy cannot liberate itself by ignoring its weakness," and philosophy must understand itself "as part of the process of society's life." Philosophy "should bring about the destruction of global antagonisms," but "philosophy proclaims its weakness and thereby renounces praxis." "This Congress must eschew all political overtones" and yet must affirm the principle that "philosophies can change the world."

<sup>2</sup> From a popular song: "todos los días le escribía / mas su amor fue traicionero / tantas cartas recibía / se casó con el cartero."

The content of this first part of this chapter may be schematized in the square below:



If this schema does nothing but focus the anguishing contemporary rupture between philosophy and religion, it is sufficient. It shows that we presently lack a global philosophy and impels us to leap directly into the heart of the question by asking what relationship between philosophy and religion is possible today. This relation can neither be uncritically assumed as self-evident, nor adopted as a compromise. It can only follow from an analysis of religion and philosophy as they understand themselves. Here the concept of *ontonomy* may prove useful.<sup>3</sup>

We could perhaps see the relation between philosophy and religion in three ways. *Heteronomy* refers to domination; one is assumed superior to the other. The higher, superior one establishes the laws that the lower one must obey. The history of religions and philosophy provides numerous examples: philosophy as the handmaiden of religion, religion as pop philosophy for the unenlightened masses. Clearly, we cannot accept this position. Subjecting philosophy to religion destroys philosophy or degrades it to an ideology, making of it the mercenary of some nonphilosophical power (even if we call it God). On the other hand, subjecting religion to philosophy spells death for religion by reducing it to a poor translation of philosophical speculation, to the belief of the masses.

The second attitude is *autonomy*, the understandable reaction to any sort of external imposition. It affirms complete independence and disconnection, ignoring the fact that philosophy and religion have the same concern. Ultimately both would collapse: Without philosophy, religion is blind fanaticism; without religion, philosophy examines merely a corpse, not a living being. Their relation cannot be to maintain peaceful "frontiers" because there is only one "territory."

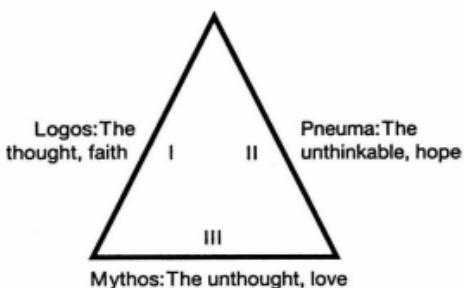
*Ontonomy* expresses this peculiar relationship, neither dominance nor sullen independence. The disciplines are intrinsically connected, and this relationship is constitutive: They are interrelated in such a way that the laws of one have repercussions for the other. Philosophy is not a substitute for religion, nor is religion an excuse to dispense with philosophy. Philosophy is itself a religious problem, and religion is also philosophical inquiry. Is an authentic philosophy of religion possible today? I think it suffices in this context to pose the question and outline some of its ramifications for philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> See R. Panikkar, *Le concept d'ontonomie*, *Actes du Xe Congrès International de Philosophie*, Bruxelles, 2–26 August 1952 (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1953), 3:182–88.

## 2

## THE THREEFOLD GIFT AND TASK OF PHILOSOPHY

The sign for what follows is a triangle, the threefold gift and so also the threefold task of philosophy in the intellectual situation of our times:



Nowadays there are indeed indications (temptations?) of a global philosophy: philosophy is not only the love of wisdom but also the wisdom of love (which perhaps does more etymological justice to the word): philosophy as the integration of the body, of society, of the cosmos with the infinite or with the human spirit. But perhaps even this has not been radical enough and perhaps the discomfort of today's philosophy arises precisely from this: that these three tasks, these three gifts of philosophy, have not been sufficiently considered. The main emphasis has been one-sided. I would like to offer a suggestion, not for a global philosophy, but for a common philosophical task.

### Acceptance of the *Logos*

The acceptance of the *logos* is the first business of philosophy. Certainly, the *logos* has primacy and privilege in philosophy. The *logos* must not be abolished, superseded, or given up in favor of irrationalism, emotionalism, fideism, or some other rebellions, all one-sided. In philosophy the *logos* plays an irreplaceable double role: that of illuminating and clarifying, and that of critiquing, testing, controlling. If anything contradicts the *logos* it cannot be accepted: The *logos* has the veto power in philosophy. The *logos*, however, must recognize its lower and upper limits and remain aware of them. It dare not suppress either *mythos* or *pneuma*, the other constituents of philosophy. To cite the *Kāṭha-upaniṣad*:

*Neither by the word nor by the spirit  
nor by sight can be ever be reached.  
How, then, can be be realized  
except by exclaiming: "He is!"?*<sup>1</sup>

The perspective of other philosophical traditions perhaps permits us to grasp in words what is properly unspeakable. Is the word the only medium of philosophy? Furthermore, have we not reduced the word to only a single facet of its many dimensions? Is the word not this realm between objective being and subjective thought that is richer than mere intelligibility, than what has merely been thought?

As the *Rg-veda* says,

*The Word is measured in four quarters,  
The Wise who possess insight know these four divisions.  
Three quarters, concealed in secret, cause no movement.  
The fourth is the quarter which is spoken by Men.*<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps then every speaking is already a hermeneutic, an expression; but is there no other way to communicate than spoken expression? *Logos* is *vāc, śabda, brahman*, sound, contents; but it is also icon, *eidos*, gesture, expression, form.

### Taking Up the *Mythos*

There is, however, a second side to philosophy, which has a right not only to be philosophy, to participate in philosophy, but also to coexist with it: Not only does the *acceptance of the logos* belong to philosophy, but *taking up the mythos* as well. Philosophy is not only entry into the thought, but also into the unthought. Man knows through the *logos* that he uncards from myth and that he still remains in myth. *Mythos* is the second dimension of speech itself, the silence between the words, the matrix that bears the words. The mythical always runs its course above time and space. It is not quite enough to say it is always present, nor that to live myth is to live in the past. Only from the perspective of the *logos* does the myth occur in the past; myth itself does not know these temporal coordinates of past, present, and future. If I try to explain myth with the *logos*, I can only represent it *in illo tempore*, which is interpreted as past. No living myth—and we all live in myths—can be interpreted through the strainer of mythology. The light of the *logos* dispels the darkness of myth, and myth measured by the standard of the *logos* cannot withstand it.

*Logos* finds *mythos* ridiculous, just as myth is not disconcerted by mythology. Nobody living mythically would acknowledge as valid the interpretation of mythology given by rational philosophers. To assume, for instance, that a sun-worshipper appeals to a heavenly body defined by Newtonian categories would be to deceive oneself utterly. The sun-worshipper will feel not only misunderstood but astonished at the naïveté of the interpreter—as if Newton were not also drawing from another myth.

We cannot possibly understand myth by logical illumination—an effort that contradicts itself—but mythology can also be *mythos-legein*. *Legein* means telling, and in this telling sense we can bring mythology into harmony with *logo-myth*. For *logos* has also a mythical dimen-

<sup>1</sup> *KathU VI.12.*

<sup>2</sup> *RV I.164.45.*

sion, otherwise it could not exist. *Mythos* also belongs to philosophy, but neither as reflexive consciousness nor as a second-class organ somehow subordinate to the *logos*. *Mythos* is not ancillary to *logos*. The mythical dimension does not mean that I think the unthought—for then it would obviously cease to be unthought. It is an important task of philosophy to admit *mythos* as an organ *sui stante*, a contact with reality.

Now we cannot perceive our own myths qua myths; we can only recognize the myths of others or those of our own past. Myths are ultimate because they do not have any other background over against which they could be recognized as such. We can only take up living myths and allow them to unfold. Our prejudices (prejudgments), our presuppositions, our unreflective convictions, these all have a mythical character. Demythicization is necessary once one is unhappy with his "myth": because the *logos* has already replaced it; but each demythicization brings with it a remythicizing. We destroy one myth—and rightly so if that myth no longer fulfills its purpose—but somehow a new myth always arises simultaneously. Man cannot live without myths. You know you have a stomach, but if it is functioning healthily, you do not think about it. This attitude of confidence is absolutely necessary for a healthy development of philosophy.

The meaning of dialogue comes into the picture here. The necessity for dialogue in philosophy is grounded in the fact that no one is aware of his own myths, his mute presuppositions, and that we must reciprocally disclose and make these myths conscious. A presupposition I recognize as presupposition is no longer presupposed; it is a supposition, an assumption, a rule agreed upon, a principle. I can, however, discover the other's presuppositions, and vice versa; a mutual critique and fertilization then become possible. Solipsism is not only methodologically barren, it is also unphilosophical. Dialogue is necessary, not as something we welcome in our vast tolerance, but precisely because only the other is able to recognize and criticize my myths, my silent presuppositions. But we should not want to stick willingly to one particular myth, for then it would be no longer myth but "bad faith." Although myth ceases to be myth each time it is discovered, detached, made *logos*, it still remains the inexhaustible source of renewal. The procession from *mythos* to *logos* is inexhaustible.

This process is not an isolated event, not a monologue; it demands dialogue for two reasons. Dialogue first of all is *duologue*, that is, two *logoi* meet and mutually unearth their mythical presuppositions. Dialogue presupposes that neither partner is self-sufficient, perfected, complete. But second, dialogue means *dia-logos*, that is, it is not just a pair of speeches, but a transcending of the *logos*, a going-through the *logos* by means of the *logos*. The way leads from myth through *logos* to the *pneuma*.

In sum, the task of philosophy is to let the unthought be, but also to allow thought to emerge from it, and in this operation the unthought is never exhausted.

### Reception of the *Pneuma*

The third task with which philosophy is gifted I would call the *reception of the pneuma*. I use *pneuma* because neither *Spirit* nor *Geist* really expresses what is meant. Not only does the unthought (*mythos*) together with the thought (*logos*) belong to philosophy, but also the unthinkable (*pneuma*). This I can neither think nor leave intact as unthought, but I must receive it as the never quite thinkable. The unthinkable does not exist in itself as a moment it is the provisional, the fixed dimension; at any given moment it is the provisional, the historical that accomplishes itself in the future, in hope. As the Alpha is always more original, so the Omega is always more ultimate. Receiving the *pneuma* is a permanent passage, a *pascha*, a pilgrimage; the procession from *mythos* through *logos* to *pneuma* is endless. Precisely this

pneumatic dimension guarantees the constant openness into which we may take a step forward. This philosophy-on-the-way cannot allow itself to stop. If it stops it risks making the *pneuma*; it thereby tumbles backward onto the plane of the *logos*. We can only say: We should not trouble the *pneuma*.<sup>3</sup>

To summarize: *logos*, *mythos*, and *pneuma* correspond to the thought, the unthought, and the unthinkable. These three interpenetrate, there is a *perichoresis*, they dwell within one another.

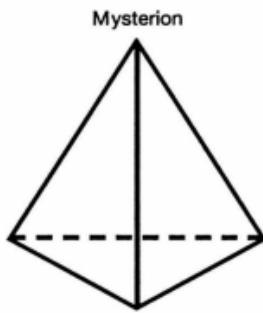
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<sup>3</sup> See Eph. 4:30.

## 3

## THE ONE MYSTERY

The following tetrahedron can symbolize this presentation:



The four faces contain the four dimensions of philosophy of which I spoke at first. That they are triangles represents the threefold gift and task of philosophy as integral integrity. The point in which all converge, and from which the whole tetrahedron issues, I would call the *mysterion*. I have said nothing about this because there is nothing to say.

\*

Nowhere better than here can we detect the precariousness of our words. This is almost always the case when we try to speak in a cross-cultural perspective. To have written, for instance, *maya* or *brahman* for *mysterion*, *vac* or *buddhi* for *logos*, *cit* or *manas* for *pneuma* (and worst *katha* or *dharma* for *mythos*) would not have helped our analysis because the entire problematic should have then taken a basically different turn. Yet to have climbed by one particular way up to the heights of reality does not prove that there is only one peak, but from one summit we may have a better view.



## SECTION XII

### ATHENS OR JERUSALEM

### Philosophy of Religion?\*

\* \* \*

### 1

### THEME AND THESIS

The general theme of the University of Santa Clara's ongoing program is "Philosophical Issues in Christian Perspective." And the particular theme of this conference is "Philosophy and Religious Experience." I will address myself to the two.

My overall impression, which I am not going to explain fully here, is that there has to be something disturbing, or even wrong, somewhere down the line, which makes us deal with the problem in such a way. At the back of my mind is the conviction that the West is currently closing a certain period of self-understanding. We are not just drawing the curtain at the end of one act in the historical drama. It is the end of History itself. We are witnessing a mutation in human consciousness. The human situation, through internal as well as external crises and catastrophes, is changing radically. We can no longer rely on the mental crutches of piecemeal reforms or patchwork. In such times as ours, speaking of "business as usual" would be an aberration. If prehistory has yielded to history, so must historical Man now give way to a post- or transhistorical being.

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\* "Philosophy and Revolution: The Text, the Context, and the Texture," *Philosophy East and West* XXIII, no. 3 (1973): 315-22.

Today no tradition is self-sufficient. This is not the least result of the cross-cultural situation of our time. No human, religious tradition can cope with the problems and paradoxes of the total human predicament. Any human problem presented today in the light of only a single tradition is already—to say the least—wrongly put, methodologically inadequate. No Man stands (or falls) alone. Today's comprehensive human crises cannot be grasped in isolation from one another, or from one angle only.

We need a new vision, a further horizon of meaning, which no single culture or person or ideology can provide. To forge any sort of future at all for humankind will require a mutual fecundation among the disparate cultures of the world—new and old, far and wide, primordial and sophisticated as well.

Mutual fecundation implies love and sympathy, of course. More than this, it implies knowing each other—which is one of the most serious philosophical problems of our times. And to know the other on its own terms is a risky venture. I feel that present-day Western culture, out of fear, knowingly or unknowingly, employs a great variety of spiritual and intellectual “contraceptives” that are preventing a genuine fecundation and the birth of a new “child.”

And here no Christian should get irritated. It is written: εν Χριστω καινη κτισις (2 Cor 5:17): we are always a new creation in Christ. Further, as Buddha might say (or his tradition, at least), every moment is so absolutely new and unique that we cannot even fathom its infinite difference from the previous one. Thus failing to notice the tremendous novelty of each moment, we soon forget even the possibility of renewal.

#### *Athens or Jerusalem? Philosophy or religion?*

To pinpoint the more concrete topic of this presentation, I have applied myself to tackle eight points—so that in spite of all my circumvolutions, you will probably be able to follow me.

## THE GHOST OF THE CHRISTIAN WEST

My first point is to denounce the "ghost" of Western Christian civilization. This specter that has been haunting Christian thought since its beginning (and, within the peculiar perspective of Christian history, perhaps rightly so) is *pantheism*.

The fear of pantheism has conditioned Christian thought down the ages, but the price has been a high one. We should not forget that pantheism is right, even from within the Christian perspective, in what it affirms, that is, that "God is All." But it is wrong in that which it denies, that is, "God is no more than this Everything." By making this two-way identification, pantheism has undermined its capacity for negation. There is no stance, no platform, from which you can say "no." If all is Being, all is God, there is no standpoint from which you can say: No-Being, no-God, *a-sat*, Nothingness. There is no ontological *locus* from which you can deny anything. God is pure affirmation, and, if everything is God, you cannot step outside this All-God in order to deny it.

Yet a pantheistic mood may have made its inroads into the Christian soul since the current speculation about Nothingness and Non-Being appears to many as an amazing discovery, as if it were not the characteristic of the creature to embody the possibility of negation. "Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!"<sup>1</sup> says Mephistopheles.

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<sup>1</sup> "I am the Spirit who always denies."

## 3

## THE FALL INTO DUALISM

Now, by fighting pantheism, which amounts to fighting monism, Christian culture has fallen smack into dualism. And there, in a nutshell, we find—between the Scylla of pantheism or monism and the Charybdis of dualism—the difficult navigation presently facing Christian thought. All the pairs of concepts we so often deal with—natural and supernatural, God and creature, good and evil, reason and experience, philosophy and theology, and (to come to the point) religion and philosophy—need to be substantially qualified. I submit that these dichotomies are not ultimate, and that what the West has seen as disruptive or *dialectical tensions* could perhaps be converted into *creative polarities*. And that, I insist, is more than just a phrase.

## WHAT HAS PHILOSOPHY TO DO WITH RELIGION

On the one hand, philosophy, since Descartes, has often been considered as a natural search, as the work of the *intellectus*. Religion, on the other hand, has been hailed as superrational light, as a supernatural revelation. This opinion has created that dichotomy that has haunted the West since very nearly the beginning of Christian thinking. *What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?* Not only Tertullian but others as well have used this metaphoric way of speaking to stress the "folly of the cross," the "newness" of Christianity, the Christian "scandal," the *stultitia mundi*, and ultimately Christian superiority. Excellent. But the very moment we reflect on it, it ceases to be a scandal and becomes a hypocritical rationalization and self-justification. Innocence is lost as soon as I take refuge in the scandal of the cross, the folly of the Christian message—because, then, I am doing just the opposite: justifying myself and condemning the others because they don't have the courage or the insight to deal with the *scandalum*.

Is it not true that the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee<sup>1</sup> renders any conscious prayer impossible? Once we have heard it, what is our attitude going to be? If I know that, by being humble, I will be justified, then I am just pretending when I say, "Lord, Lord, have mercy, I am a sinner." And do I expect to gain God's forgiveness by this? Then the parable applies to me: thinking myself to be justified by virtue of my confession of sins, I will not be justified or forgiven. If, on the other hand, I think that I am not so bad after all, somewhat a good fellow, I damn myself. The moment we try to introduce thinking in this reflexive way, prayer becomes impossible, innocence is lost, and perhaps that "middle way" of which both Aristotle and the Buddha spoke becomes impassable.

I do not even consider the *fides quaerens intellectum* sufficient in the current world context. As if *fides* without *intellectus* were *fides* at all, and vice versa. As if *intellectus* were so self-supporting that it does not require some kind of *pistis*, of *fides*, of faith, confidence, trust, at least among its own findings. The relationship between faith and understanding is not that faith is so well prepared that it only needs to have a look around to find an understanding agreeing with its own assumptions. Faith is the existential openness of Man to all that he is not. Authentic faith neither requires rational proofs nor falls into irrational fideism, but is of another type altogether.

Faith and understanding are constitutively interdependent and constantly conditioning each other. Faith implies understanding, understanding implies faith—although (not to deny the principle of noncontradiction) I would say that these two implications are not of

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<sup>1</sup> Lk 18:10-14.

the same genre, that is, the kind of understanding that faith implies is not the same kind of faith that understanding entails.

What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? If we now choose to put all the blame on the Hellenistic interpretation of the gospel, it may be a very interesting *kulturpolitische* weapon, but it certainly would not stand a deeper scrutiny.

## 5

## “BY THEIR FRUITS YOU WILL KNOW THEM”<sup>1</sup>

Philosophy without religion is ineffective, barren, mere hair-splitting, dry, and dead. Religion without philosophy is blind, sectarian, “provincial,” emotional, and irrational.

Most philosophical issues—the meaning of life, of death, of being, of goodness, of truth, of justice, of freedom—are religious queries. Most religious concerns—salvation, peace, joy, praise, adoration, recognition of a higher instance—are philosophical problems. Neither a *politique des domaines séparés* nor a peaceful coexistence will do.

The juridical separation of church and state, which attests to some degree the political health of Western countries, should not be confused with a separation between religion and life. Church and state are not synonymous with religion and life.

The point is that this mutual estrangement is mortal for both. Philosophy becomes logical positivism, linguistic analysis, or some other sort of rationalistic, interesting, but ultimately barren analysis. Religion becomes a kind of fundamentalist attitude, full of unexamined preconceptions, on the verge of becoming sectarian, narrow-minded, even fanatical.

Perhaps the situation is a little like that of the Latin poet Catullus, caught in the throes of an impossible love: “Nec cum te nec sine te vivere possum” (Neither with you nor without you is existence for me bearable). Neither together nor separated can we live. If we lump philosophy and religion together, then a pitfall is lurking in such a confusion. But if we separate the two, the divorce is lethal for both parties.

Indeed, the concept prevailing today in the West of a rational—I am not saying rationalistic—philosophy is an exception in human history, including Western history. Up until the thirteenth century (and this tendency continues in Pico della Mirandola and others deep into the Renaissance), philosophy was not considered anything other than a meditation on the ways to salvation, a becoming conscious of one’s human situation. The church fathers spoke of *imitatio Christi vera philosophia* (true philosophy means to imitate Christ), and so on. It is an exception in human history to suppose that philosophy has nothing to do with salvation.

The Asian traditions as a whole link philosophy intimately with salvation, to the extent that—according to Bhartrahari—we study grammar in order to reach *mokṣa*. “Mea grammatica Christus est,” said the Christian Scholastics. Because to study grammar is not just to know syntax and the parts of speech and little Indo-European roots, but to delve into the meaning of the very words in which salvation is enunciated. Because “in the beginning was the Word” (*vac*), says the *Tanṣya-Maha Brahmanā* (and other teachings like that).

Further, I dare affirm that the very concept of a merely rational philosophy is the most antiphilosophical attitude conceivable. It is not philosophical. It is perhaps scientific. We all know the allure science exerts on philosophy, and the inferiority complex that philosophical investigations have been suffering under because of the great success of physical sciences. We

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 7:20.

all know that, when Kant spoke about the Copernican revolution in philosophy, he meant that as more than just a metaphor. He wanted philosophy to have the power, the certainty, and the success that the sciences after Galileo seemed to have achieved.

Such a conception of philosophy may be rigorously scientific, but it is not philosophical. It does not inquire about its own foundations; it does not come to grips with the very sandy ground on which it has to stand; it does not question its very tools, and so on.

Who will know the knower? Who will watch the watcher? Who is going to ask the embarrassing questions? Who is going to undermine our securities? Who is going to bomb our certainties?

## PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

One unsuccessful but, I add, meritorious effort was the one called philosophy of religion. The philosophy of religion tried to be a sort of bridge or life raft to help us survive this shipwreck.

We may here recall that the trick of Leibniz was to invent a *theodicy*. In fact, he said, "Come, let us call the good God to our tribunal of reason," meanwhile whispering to his colleagues, "Shhh . . . You will see that He will overcome, but let's play the game of theodicy so that we may justify the existence, the nature, and the power of the Divine by means of our pure reason." Such a theodicy has of course proven unsuccessful on cultural grounds, and on purely philosophical grounds as well.

The philosophy of "an object called religion" is, I submit, a blasphemy from the religious point of view, and a suicide from the philosophical one. I will try to explain.

a. It is blasphemous from a religious point of view. How can Man judge God? How can reason presume to condition faith? How can human understanding dictate the conditions of intelligibility to divine revelation? Who decides what is religion, and what superstition? If there is a God, I must condition myself to Him, not condition Him to me. A God who needs my understanding is, from a religious point of view, a plain non sequitur. It denies the mysterious character of the Divine. A similar line of thought applies to nontheistic religions. If philosophy tells me what religion is and must be, it has already supplanted religion.

When a philosopher declares that whatever God may say and reveal, I have nevertheless to understand it, the religionist will reply, "Well, so sorry for the Man who does not understand, but if you can understand it only on your own terms, so much the worse for you. *That* is not the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," to follow the Judeo-Christian-Muslim tradition.

To submit the infinite freedom of the self-disclosure of the Divine to analysis—even if respectful in every way, even if it were (as Hans Urs von Balthasar would like to say) *eine kniende Theologie*, "a kneeling theology," a theology in adoration and awe—even so, it is not enough, because we then presume to encompass the infiniteness of the Divine in our "earthen vessels"<sup>1</sup> and human minds. Who decides where the limits are? Who draws the line? Who can say what is God's word and what is mere human structure?

Perhaps since Descartes there is a cultural obsession in this part of the world: certainty, which can also be translated as security. Note that in Descartes the two are not yet distinguished: certainty of the mind, security in our lives. And here you may read all the political connotations you like. Today's precarious human predicament mutely testifies to the dangers inherent in this obsession with being secure and having security—rational, philosophical, individual, collective, or national.

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Cor 4:7.

b. If, on the other hand, philosophy yields, this can only mean the destruction of philosophy. Philosophy, since the very invention of the word, stands for an ultimate and free inquiry, an ultimate and unhampered wisdom that yields to nothing and nobody. Any eclipse of this freedom precipitates the collapse of philosophy. If philosophy is not the free unfolding of all the powers at our disposal in our effort to understand reality, then it is not philosophy at all. If philosophy has to take orders or accept dictates from any other superior agency, it has already abdicated its own self-understanding.

This is why, when someone says, "I respect philosophy very much, but above it there is another realm which philosophy must respect," the philosopher can sharply reply, "We should be on an equal footing. If we do not share the same platform, we cannot dialogue. Since my life totally depends on the truth that I, the philosopher, am able to find out for myself, and you have, instead, a kind of intellectual insurance policy that gives you all the answers in advance, I cannot dialogue with you." And perhaps, from a human point of view, the very *insecuritas* and risk of the philosopher is the better part of wisdom.

In fact, if philosophy yields to religion or any other instance, it turns into science, or technique. Once the limits are set, philosophy should be satisfied with an elaboration of the data, and criticism of the data, and all of this is no doubt useful in generating still more data. But philosophy ceases to be that kind of integral wisdom that, all over the world, including Africa (although there, philosophy has more the beauty of art than the skills of word), deals with the ultimate meanings and values. It simply collapses. You can have a mathematics of love, but love is different from mathematics. There may be a quantifiable element, some mathematical coefficients, in love; but love is more than mathematics.

Philosophy of religion is different from, and more than, a mathematics of love, or sound, or anything else. If philosophy leaves something of which it is conscious outside of its scrutiny, it is no longer philosophy. It is no longer integral wisdom. The mathematical aspect of love (whatever this may be) does not claim to tell us what love is, but only to describe its mathematical dimension. The philosophical aspect of religion, on the other hand, claims to tell us what religion is. It will have to examine or justify or dismiss the supraphilosophical status or claims of religion, if such a case arises.

The modern distinction between philosophy and theology, which I have no time to develop here, does not resolve the dilemma either. The same aporia, the same set of thorny problems appears in theology quite as pointedly as in philosophy.

But philosophy of religion can take on still another meaning. The most subtle, deep, and fascinating grammatical case in all Indo-European languages (I cannot speak for others) is the genitive. Among the many things that the genitive denotes, we tend to neglect the subjective genitive against the objective genitive. Philosophy of religion can not only mean the philosophy or philosophical inquiry or philosophical understanding on an object or a thing or an entity called religion, but it also reverberates in the sense of the subjective genitive. For example, "Gandhi's biography" can be Louis Fischer's biography of Gandhi, or Gandhi's own autobiography. Not a biography about Gandhi, but the biography of Gandhi, namely, his own biography, written by himself.

Philosophy of religion can not only mean a philosophy dealing with religion, but philosophy of religion, subjective genitive: the philosophy that is contained in religion, the philosophy that religion is, the intellectual dimension of that complex structure called religion. If religion has the existential character of leading Man toward his fullness, his destiny, last condition, or whatever, collectively or individually (in whatever sense we may understand this word), philosophy would then be the intellectual awareness that accompanies that being in pilgrimage toward his destiny and final station.

## THREE ATTITUDES

Now, in the field of philosophy of religion, which also implies the history of cultures—I could here equally integrate the Buddhist and Indic civilizations—we discover, by and large, three different attitudes.

### Heteronomy

One attitude toward the relationship between philosophy and religion is what could be called the relation of *heteronomy*. Heteronomy, that is, the *nomos* (that means the same as *dharma*, for those who don't know Greek) of a particular sphere of being is borrowed from a higher instance. A heteronomic attitude or situation is that in which the internal laws of one particular sphere of being are dictated or postulated by another (*heteron*, in Greek).

Take the relation between physics and mathematics, for example. The principles of theoretical physics are dictated by the mathematical axioms that we postulate in order to undertake successful physico-mathematical research. Heteronomy means that one is "the boss." Caesaropapism, totalitarian ideologies, *philosophia ancilla theologiae*,<sup>1</sup> are examples of heteronomy.

Now, this relationship can work both ways. If religion is the boss, it tells us what philosophy is and what philosophy has to do. "We, the priests, the scribes, the brahmans, know better. We have a hotline to divine revelation. We have the *mokṣa-anubhava*, we have the real intuition, and now you philosophers may set it out, explain it to the people, put it in palatable terms. Otherwise, they might neglect the temples and follow the path of perdition."

When religion is the boss, philosophy has just to interpret, to dig out another subtle distinction, to say, for example, that when St. Paul wrote that, he did not mean *that*, he meant another thing that Bultmann will now explains to us.

You remember Goethe's pat saying: "Wer Wissenschaft und Kunst besitzt, hat auch Religion; wer jene beiden nicht besitzt, der habe Religion" (Those who possess science and art already have religion). There is no need of religion, religion is for the masses, for those who do not know. "Those who do not have both [science and art] should have religion."

Heteronomy, when the higher instance is religion, in whatever form, kills philosophy.

### Autonomy

The situation is not improved at all if, instead of heteronomy, we share the great modern dogma of autonomy. Auto-nomy: each *nomos* enjoys its own independence, its own self-identification. In autonomy, both religion and philosophy die. The emancipation of religion from philosophy, and philosophy from religion, has produced the disintegration of both.

<sup>1</sup> Philosophy as a servant of theology.

Philosophy emancipating itself from religion becomes science, or worse, a slave of science, aping the methods of science, as if philosophy had not its own *sui generis* character. Religion without the intrinsic, inner, constitutive collaboration of philosophy may become powerful, but nevertheless a sect. It loses self-criticism and gets blind. Furthermore, human life is one, and human events belong simultaneously to many realms. Who decides competence? Who decides what belongs to one realm and what belongs to another? When is marriage a sacrament, or just a contract? Is law just a bundle of traffic regulations and the like, or does it bind me in conscience?

### Ontonomy

There is a third way. As the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* says, "He revealed himself three-fold." Or, as the *Mahābhārata* comments, "Every perfect thing is threefold." Ontonomy is that other: the middle way, and the *only* way for us.

With a neologism, we may call it: ontonomy. *Onto-nomy* is the *nomos* ("rule" or "law") of the *on* ("being"): *ontos nomos*. It is the intrinsic rule of each being (*on*, in Greek) that conditions and governs that particular being *within* the whole of reality. Ontonomy implies a kind of cosmotheandric optimism; it opens up the possibility of a universal harmony underlying everything.

Ontonomy does not look for the *maximum*: the more, the better. The more powerful we can become, the better. The more our economy can grow, the better. If you can become richer, why not? If we, that is, 6 percent of the world's population, instead of using and abusing 34 percent of the world's energy and controlling 60 percent of it, can have still more—why not? The maximum.

Ontonomy tries, instead, to attain the *optimum*, therefore discovering that, for example, it is not good for the stomach to overeat, because, even if the stomach can digest the surplus, my whole organism will suffer. And, likewise, it is not good for a nation to be the most powerful, because that excess of power may trigger not only reactions from outside, but also excesses of guilt, depression, obsession, and melancholies of all sorts.

And it is not out of renunciation that I should abstain from eating too much, even though what I do not eat may not feed anybody else. The reason is much deeper, and ontonomic. It is intrinsic to the very working and well-being and welfare of an individual, or of a stomach or a society or the entire reality.

It means to discover the inner rules that regulate the entire universe, and, further on, to discern that these laws are not cached in neat little independent boxes, each working autonomously on its own, but that everything is connected. To rediscover, if you will, the law of *karman*. Or to rediscover that original sin (another way to say the same thing in a less popular parlance) is more than just a whim or an innocuous myth to be reinterpreted. It means therefore to discover the total and cosmic solidarity of all things, because we are interdependent and interconnected with everything, so that everything that happens here has repercussions all over the world. The best thing for me, then, is not just the best thing for a small isolated "me," but it re-echoes in every sphere of the Real. My personality does not end at my fingernails, but reaches into the rivers I have swum in, into the friends I have met, irritated, or whatever. We all belong to one complex Whole, in which everything is constitutively interdependent.

Philosophy and religion—to go back to the point—are neither *one*, united, the same; nor *two*, separated, having nothing to do with one another, and saying as they meet, as it were, "That is your domain, this is my domain, and we respect each other." No. Who

decides whose domain is whose? Philosophy in itself is a religious query. Religion in itself is a philosophical problem.

Authentic philosophizing—and since Kant, we all know the difference between a professor of philosophy and a philosopher—is a religious experience. It is the intellectual dimension of the total human experience. On the other hand, the practice of religion has an intellectual ingredient. So-called philosophy may have developed into a cancer, but even in the most common illiterate peasant, religious praxis has an intellectual ingredient and an intellectual dimension. And this is the philosophy of that particular person.

There is no philosophy without a claim to truth, and truth always liberates.<sup>2</sup> And liberation is the most central religious category.

There is no religion without a certain self-awareness and self-justification. And this self-awareness and self-justification are the central concerns of philosophy.

The relation between philosophy and religion is neither heteronomic, so that religion or theology or any supposedly higher instance can dictate what philosophy is or has to be; or vice versa, so that philosophy can simply discriminate and relegate religion to a precinct in which the latter is permitted to move with some degree of freedom; nor is it an autonomous relation in which the two move in utter independence, as if the whole of reality were split into two different fields. It is an *ontonomic* relativity, in which the one is a dimension of the other, and each one is part and parcel in the adventure of the other.

I am delineating a kind of *perichórisis*, if you allow a transposition of the Trinity *ab intra* to the Trinity *ad extra*: *circumincestio*, interdependence, and common choreography—a dance!—between all the elements of Reality, including such complicated entities as philosophy and religion.

This is my general thesis, that is, that the relationship between the two is an ontonomous one; so that the religious dimension of life has an intellectual side that is called philosophy, and the philosophical endeavor of Man has an existential side that is called religion.

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<sup>2</sup> See Jn 8:32.

## A CRITIQUE OF SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

I now come to a critique, in the technical sense of the word, of some assumptions that underlie this holistic vision, and of which I am well aware.

### The Dethronement of the *Logos*

The *Logos* ceases to be the all-dominating, the only distinctive and highest element of reality, be it set in the womb of the Divine,<sup>1</sup> or in the dignity of Man, or wherever.

There is a crypto-heresy that has surreptitiously been dominating for twenty centuries of Christian history—that is, that the Spirit is left out or, at best, co-opted by the *Logos*. And when modern theologians discover that the Spirit has been thrown away, they try to repair the loss by working out a theo-*logy* of the Holy Spirit, which is a heresy that the first Councils defined as *subordinationism*. When you subordinate the Spirit to the *Logos*, you interrupt that cosmic dance of the Trinity. You imprison the Divine, and the Human as well, in a single dimension of the Real.

There is another dimension to Reality, irreducible and not inferior to the *Logos*, and that is the *Pneuma*, the Spirit: another side of God, another side of Man, another side of Matter, different but certainly not separated, the one being neither inferior nor reducible to the other. So that, if we go to the Spirit through the *Logos*, we fall into the very subordinationism that the first Councils considered a heresy. And no wonder! There must be a direct apprehension, a *sui generis* awareness of the Spirit, that neither contradicts, nor merely supplements, nor even complements, but I dare say *implements* the very work of the *Logos*.

So, the first assumption is the dethronement of the “*Logos* alone,” or, in the sublunar world, the dethronement of *reason* alone. The function of reason is not to reveal, the function of reason is not to discover, but to check, to control, to accept, to prove. And that is quite important. Reason offers the negative criterion for truth: something that does not pass the sieve of reason, or contradicts the principle of noncontradiction, cannot be true. But reason is not that which reveals, or discovers, or puts us in immediate contact with reality. It only checks, controls, gives us certain proofs, and when successful, formulates.

A new wisdom is required. We cannot do without the *Logos*, but we cannot do with the *Logos* alone, and much less with reason alone.

### The Relativity of Belief

The second assumption: I make a fundamental distinction between *faith* as existential openness, as a constitutive human dimension, and *belief* as the intellectual articulation of our convictions or of our faith. Each belief, or each system of beliefs, is only meaningful and

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<sup>1</sup> See Jn 1:18.

can only be believed from within an accepted myth. And the act of faith, a saving faith, is the act of existentially affirming this universal faith in our concrete beliefs: the courage to be what we (believe we) are.

When I say "relatively," I am making another distinction, between *relativity* and *relativism*. Relativism is an agnostic position that in fact contradicts itself. If I say that nothing really matters, and no one can know anything, and it does not matter if something is white or black or whatever, then I destroy my own purpose: why should anybody even take my position seriously? But relativism should be distinguished from relativity. Relativity implies two things. First, everything is *related* and can be seen just in relation to a certain perspective or standpoint and within a context. Second, everything is *relative*, in a sense that makes any claim to absoluteness impossible. This, perhaps, was the great Buddhist intuition of *pratityasamutpāda*, or radical relativity of all things.

### Awareness of an Ever-Provisional Standpoint

The third and final assumption: any human construct or construction, any human fact, reality, or assertion, is only such for the *time being*, that is, for our *being in time*.

Since there is no absoluteness in any sense, we become aware of the provisional condition of all our formulations, convictions, assertions, and worldviews. Only this awareness allows growth, change, continuity, and (to use a word that I cannot justify here) *pluralism*. To say, then, that my assertion that everything is relative is *also* relative does not invalidate my assertion of relativity, because it does not exclude the possibility of an Absolute. If everything is relative, this sentence is also relative; relative to our degree of awareness, to our being in space and time, and so on.

This implies a radical need for one another: we look for the encounter of cultures, philosophies, religions. It implies that we are not self-sufficient, and that in this provisional condition we can only grow through the stimuli, the corrections, irritations, attacks, even the errors of the other—and vice versa.

I would like to underscore that the awareness of this provisionality endows every assertion we make with a coefficient of freedom and, at the same time, endows us with the very freedom to make such assertions.

## ATHENS AND/OR JERSUALEM?

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?

The *agora* is as sacred as the temple. The intellect is as religious as the will. The temple of Solomon, the church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the Muslim *masjid*<sup>1</sup> are as sacred to their respective followers as a bank or the parliament is to a secularized society. The Sacred is opposed to the *profane*, but not necessarily opposed to the *secular*. To have had a monopoly of the Sacred against the profane, and identified the profane with the secular, can be counted as one of the reasons for at least part of the anguish of present-day Western civilization.

All this means, besides, that politics is as much a religious activity as cult—that the great religious problems today may well be hunger, peace, and justice, and not just the number of angels, or other very respectable and equally important theoretical questions. The relation between politics and religion is, again, an a-dualistic one.

One final remark. Is experience the bridge between religion and philosophy? My answer is yes, and no. Yes, because both religion and philosophy are based on and received in experience.

No, because experience alone does not exist. It is not conscious, it is not powerful, it is not useful. We cannot manipulate experience. We cannot extrapolate experience. We already go beyond experience, if we use it to justify our own interpretations of it. Experience is vulnerable. It has no further criterion—"Hier stehe ich, und kann nicht anders,"<sup>2</sup> as Luther observed when witnessing his own experience. You are vulnerable, you have no criteria, and you cannot defend yourself. But you may be happy and in peace.... Not everything depends on my coming out as the winner, and coming up with a word for every occasion.

Experience, then, is the bridge and is not the bridge. It is the bridge, provided that you do not transit on that bridge, you keep it a virgin territory, you do not elaborate on your experience *qua* experience.

Here I would—as Fichte said, he had been damned to be a philosopher, and I cannot help being it either—I would distinguish between the empirical realm (through the senses), experiment (through reasoning reason), and experience (through intuition). And within this last I would again distinguish between experience (proper), its expression, and its interpretation. It is expression and interpretation that allow the different unfoldings of human experience, but *qua* human experience, it is really ineffable.

And ineffable means silent. So to silence I revert, after having spoken so much.

<sup>1</sup> Mosque.

<sup>2</sup> "I stay here, and I cannot do otherwise."

## SECTION XIII

### BEING AND NOTHINGNESS

#### Interrogatory Perspective on the Problem\*

This article comes from an interdisciplinary colloquium: philosophy, theology, religious studies, history of religion, political science, sociology, and whatever else happened to come up. We also discovered the necessity of being intercultural. And rightly so, for no human problem can currently be properly treated without taking the entirety of human experience somehow into account.

I here try to consider my own reflections neither as summary nor as criticism but as an occasion to think through some thoughts further so that this contribution can serve as a certain basis for continuation of the dialogue and as an inspiration for the dialogue of religions in 1984.

As the *Mahābhārata* says, "Everything threefold is perfect," so I divide this presentation into three parts—of completely different kinds.

First, I try to give a suggestive answer to the question: how does Nothingness come into philosophy?

Second, I say in parable what I would otherwise probably be unable to express. This offers practice in a different kind of thinking at the same time.

Third, I only briefly cast a retrospective over the issues under consideration, and specifically with regard to the future.

I must acknowledge from the outset that everything said here is not only imperfect and provisional but also limited to the frame of our discussions. Otherwise, I would not dare talk about one of the most difficult problems for the human intellect.<sup>1</sup>

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\* First published in German in the collection of essays: *Sein und Nichts in der abendländischen Mystik* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1984), 107–23.

<sup>1</sup> See my *El Silencio del Dios* (Madrid, 1970), and especially the second revised edition in Italian: *Il silenzio di Dio, la risposta del Buddha* (Roma, 1984). In Vol. V of this *Opera Omnia*.

## HOW DOES NOTHINGNESS COME INTO PHILOSOPHY?

The question could be phrased exactly as follows: How did Nothingness enter human consciousness? Or I should ask more precisely: How did the concept of nothingness first come to be thought of? But perhaps there is no such thought, as Bergson and Blondel, for example, would say. Whatever one might think of that, there is the word, *Nothingness*, that may perhaps be empty of thought, but that has nevertheless been influential in the history of humankind.

This question can be answered in diverse ways, and the history of the concept shows many sources: psychological, logical, theological, cultural, and so on. I limit myself to a few and do without dividing the varieties of Nothingness beyond these. I do not have primarily in mind *ens rationis*, *nihil privatuum*, *ens imaginarium*, *ens contradictionis* and the like, but rather that Nothingness that is opposed to Being per se.

### The Thinking Process

If one does not think, one never thinks that one does not think. The thought of Nothingness arises only if one thinks. Without thinking, Nothingness might lurk. That is probably the Nothingness of the East: the Unthought (of). And the indirect way, that is, the only possible way of letting us speak about it will have to go beyond thought.

The thought of Nothingness creeps in only (a) if one thinks of a "being" thing, an existing thing, and (b) if one tries to think about Being. These two clauses are ambivalent, and the thought of Nothingness creeps in with this very ambivalence.

a. When I think of something, that is, when I think something through to the end, I think of an existing thing, and that is all. I *think* of something. My thinking exhausts itself in that. And I thus think the entire reality in this something. It is, however, often the case, indeed usually so, that my thinking is not exhausted in thinking of that something, that is, I think not of the being of something, but rather of "something of something." I think (only) of something of something. I think simultaneously that I think of that something, that is, I think of that something not as Being (the Latin *esse*) but as a "being" thing (*ens*), and I am conscious of it—for that reason, I recognize it as "being."

We have a threefold consciousness: first, the thinking of something as an object. This something is available to me. I recognize that. Second, the *encompassing thinking* of something qua something, that is, *not* as the whole, *not* as Being. I am conscious myself that I do *not* think of other somethings that exist and that I think of *nothing* but that something that exists. My "something" is defined, it is thought of within a broader horizon. Third, the *subject* of my thinking act. I know that I think of something and *not* just think or not-think.

Furthermore, I know that I, and *not* someone else, am the one who thinks of that something that exists and who takes possession of that thought.

The common trait of all three thinking acts is that of limitation: I think, in that I think of something *together* (*mit-denken*) with its limits. My thinking is defined through "no-thingness": the not-thinking of other objects, the not-thinking of other perhaps possible horizons, the not-thinking of other thinking acts, regardless whether from me or from other thinking subjects.

Actually, the limits are not thought of but only thought-together when carrying out the thinking act. The limits, however, consist of the very separation between the thought object and the non-object, in the last instance, Nothingness.

We do not hereby think of Nothingness, but it is already shown as a limit of thought. Nothingness encompasses our thinking and makes it possible.

b. If one thinks of Being or, what amounts to the same thing for us, if one tries to think of Being—if that is possible—then one thinks of Being. If this thinking is perfect, something like the transparent thinking of the *visio beatifica*, then one thinks of *nothing* else. If this thinking, however, is self-conscious, then one is simultaneously conscious oneself that one thinks of *nothing* more, namely not of something. One thinks of *nothing* other than Being, and not something “being.”

In both cases (a) and (b), we find reflection a necessary presupposition for the “showing up”<sup>1</sup> of Nothingness. Nothingness is not thought of, but instead directly accessible—or better, part of the thinking process. This showing-up has a certain immediacy, but it is a reflected one.

If this pure thinking of Being succeeds, that is, if Being’s complete reflexivity about itself is attained, then there is no room for Nothingness. Being is there in its absolute transparency, with nothing else remaining. This Nothingness can be admitted only along the way toward such transparency, that is, only so long as Being does not exclusively think itself through.

### A Matter of “Heart”

Expectation is human nature. We can also speak here of hope. But disappointment and despair are two just as fundamental human states: “It did *not* come to pass”; “The hope did *not* come true”; “*Nothing* happened instead.” More still: anguish as existential human state has no object, and if this condition is explained rationally, one must acknowledge that anguish is over *nothing*, that is, over Nothingness.

Again: love is also a basic human experience. But love wants ever more. *Nothing* can quench love. Complete unification would negate love, destroy it, that is, so long as there is love, there is simultaneously the experience that love is *not* fulfilled. The sense of nothing surfaces everywhere. The common trait here is one of absence, but an experienced absence.

The experience of absence is always a complex and secondary experience. It presupposes a deficiency, a *privatio*. The experience of absence cannot be objective, for one experiences precisely that there is no object to fill that absence. The experience, however, is also not purely subjective, except for the pathological case (such as feeling the absence of a sister who is present). A dead person is absent, but a not-yet-conceived person is not. Nothingness would thus be absence of Being. But what does that mean? We can imagine the absence of something that exists. But what is this operation that negates itself when Being “is” away (*ab-wesen*)? Pure subjectivity is conceivable as a total absence of objects. But there can be no

<sup>1</sup> In German: *Aufreten*, like an actor on stage when the script says, *Enter...*.

absolute absence: the subject would negate itself. But *that "is"* precisely Nothingness, about which neither *there* nor *is* can be said.<sup>2</sup> Nothingness endures no witness.

### The Theological Path

In his dialogue *Timaeus*, Plato introduces a Demiurge who forms the world from πρωτή ύλη (prime matter), whereas Christianity advocates creation from nothing. This "nothing" designates the original absence of *materia prima*, namely, no prime matter besides the Creator.<sup>3</sup>

God was later identified with Being. One believed that the reality of the world and the absoluteness of God could be defended only by understanding the created things as having come into existence from God alone; and because they are not God, their origin could only be, so to speak, out of nothing—as documented in so many formulations.<sup>4</sup>

To simultaneously avoid both dualism and monism, the concept of Nothingness is fundamentally necessary to the Christian comprehension of reality. That is the Christian *advaita* or a-dualism: God and the world are neither one (that would be pantheism) nor two (that would be dualism and nullify the absoluteness of God). The world is real but has a reality founded on nothing. It is not *a se* (from itself), rather *a Deo*, but *ex nihilo* (from God, but out of nothing). Nothingness is, so to speak, the ground of the world's reality.<sup>5</sup>

Something similar could be said with respect to Islam and Judaism. As for the Asian traditions, they also know Nothingness as a central symbol, but the presuppositions are different, and any attempt to integrate them with the Christian line of thought would be to twist things around. We should guard against hasty syntheses and superficial comparisons, even those with good intentions. To be able to compare something, one must set out from a common basis.<sup>6</sup> In the *Vedas*, for example, Nothingness is either prior to Being or its companion. "Non-Being decided to be," says one text,<sup>7</sup> for example. "In the beginning was neither Being nor Non-Being," says another.<sup>8</sup> The problem is thus a different one.

### The Philosophical Way

Philosophy seems to me to have adopted at least two ways of dealing with the difficult problem of Nothingness: the way of seeking identity and the way of avoiding contradiction. The first way is more Eastern, the second more Western. We should make no strict division, however, as the philosophy of history teaches us.

<sup>2</sup> In German, the phrase "there is" is rendered with *es gibt*, literally "it gives." So, Nothingness is no "it" and does not "give" anything.

<sup>3</sup> See my "La creacion en la metafisica india," in *Misterio y Revelacion* (Madrid, 1971), 83–109.

<sup>4</sup> See as one example, "Et inspxi caetera infra te et vidi nec omnino esse, nec omnino non esse" [And I examined the other things, those that are below You, and I saw that they *are not*, absolutely speaking, nor are they *not*, absolutely speaking] (Augustine, *Confessiones*, VII.11).

<sup>5</sup> About the creature, says Thomas Aquinas: "Prius naturaliter inest sibi nihil quam esse" [Nothingness naturally belongs to it more than being] (*De aeternitate mundi*). And literally Meister Eckhart: "Res enim omnis creatu sapit umbram nihili" [Every created thing smells of nothingness] (*In Iohannem* I.1–3).

<sup>6</sup> See my "Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of Religion," *Man and World* 13, nos. 3–4 (1980): 357–83. In Vol. II of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>7</sup> See *TB* II.2.9.1.

<sup>8</sup> *RV* X.129.1.

### *Seeking Identity*

Philosophy since the Greeks has wanted to know what things are, what existing things really are, and so one encounters the question of what Being is.

If we ever succeed in discovering and accordingly finding what an existing thing "*a*" is, then we could truly assert that "*a*" is. But if we want to repeat and accordingly express this insight, then we must be sure that we are dealing with the same "*a*". In other words, we must assure ourselves that "*a* = *a*<sub>1</sub>".

We can do that as

$$a \equiv a$$

This meaning: as we find the identity of "*a*".

The Indic thinkers introduced into the search for this identity one of the most subtle innovations of the human mind: emptiness, that is, the vacuum, *the naught*, which is no number but makes mathematics easier and indeed makes a more developed kind of mathematics possible.<sup>9</sup>

The Greeks did not recognize the naught.<sup>10</sup> The Arabs introduced the naught from India to Europe.<sup>11</sup>

What then is the naught?<sup>12</sup> According to Indian thinkers, it is the result of a sum:<sup>13</sup>

$$a + (-a) = 0$$

<sup>9</sup> Some modern theories of number want to include the naught among numbers. But the naught would be a number at the limit, like  $\infty$ . The naught anyway does not follow the axioma that constitute the number series. And yet the Indian mathematician Mahāvīrāchārya maintains that the naught is a number (*sāṃkhyā*) exactly as the first nine numbers. See A. N. Singh in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western* (London, 1952), 1:441.

<sup>10</sup> "Si 1 est Dieu,  $\infty$  est le diable" ("If 1 is God,  $\infty$  is the devil"), wrote Simone Weil as a genuine embodiment of Jewish and Greek spirit in *La pesanteur et la grace* (Paris: Plon, 1948), 108. But the naught is Indic!

<sup>11</sup> The origin of the number system is still very obscure. For the Greeks, 10,000 was the highest number with a proper name. The Indians had *arbuda* for 100 million and *mahāksaṇiṇi* for  $10^{13}$ . From where the naught comes is uncertain. The Chinese and the Babylonians had found the position of the sign (so that 23 is not 32). The Chinese left an empty place for what the Indians later introduced as the naught, a point or a small circle. The Indians called it point (*bindu*), but also hole (*rāndhra*), ether (*ākāśa*), in-finiteness (*anata*), space, atmosphere (*antarikṣa*), and so on. The combination of the naught and the position of the sign is what mathematics accepted above all. The Mayans used the naught, probably in the first century after Christ. As a curiosity: the names for 1 were names for the earth and sometimes also for the moon. Deva (God), on the contrary, was called 33. See J. Filliozat in L. Renou and J. Filliozat (eds.), *L'Inde classique*, vol. 2 (Paris-Hanoi, 1953).

<sup>12</sup> The name of this symbol was *śūnya*, an adjective that means empty, desolate, and uninhabited. *Aūnam* means lack and is related to the avestan *sūra*, hole, abyss. The word is rich in connections. Greek κυος means cavity (cf. Latin *caverna*), but simultaneously fetus, much as the verb κυεω means being pregnant. See Sanskrit *śwayate*, it swells (swelling). *Aūna*, swollen, is the past participle of *śvā*. Naturally, cavity means also concavity, convexity. Cf. Latin *cumulus*. Indo-European scholars go so far as to connect the word with κυριος (Lord) and κοιλος (hollow). In any case, the Buddhist *śūnyatā* as Nothingness could encompass all these closely related sounds from a history of concepts perspective.

<sup>13</sup> A work called *Brāhma-sphuṭa-siddhānta* says, "The sum of two same and contradictory quantities is naught" (in Singh, op. cit., 441).

To carry out this operation properly, we must find the exact mirror image of "*a*" and not some "*a*," that is merely similar to "*a*". Only "*a*", which is identical to itself, can bring about the naught as a result. I will have had to find the identity of "*a*" to obtain the naught. Or the other way around, if I find this naught, then I know that the identity of "*a*" has been found:

$$a + 0 = a$$

This, however, is not yet quite precise if the operation is carried out with any existing thing.<sup>14</sup>

If I take away the same pencil from a pencil, what results is "no pencil," but not the naught. A "non-*a*" occurs: the nonpencil, a hole, a vacuum in the place of the pencil, but not Nothingness. In short,

$$[\text{existing thing } a] - [\text{existing thing } a] = \text{no} [\text{existing thing } a].$$

Therefore:

$$a - a = \text{no } a$$

To obtain the naught, the "*a*" must be Being itself:

$$\text{Being} - \text{Being} = \text{Nothingness.}$$

$$A - A = 0$$

Here begins the true search for identity. No object can be identical with itself if it cannot be completely itself, if it cannot possess itself completely, that is, "*a*" cannot be completely "*a*" so long as it is only an existing thing that needs me, for example, to recognize it as such. In every existing thing, we have the existing thing "*a*" plus its ground, plus its relations to other existing things constitutive of that existing thing. Briefly put, we cannot isolate any existing thing to find its identity. We would actually have to include the entirety of reality.

The fatal mistake—easily made today through the predominance of a scientific mentality—is to confuse identity with identification. For instance, we can identify "*a*" through finding its space-time coordinates. We then will not confuse that "*a*" for anything else, but that is far from being its identity.<sup>15</sup> In short, the "*a*" that we subtract from "*a*" is "*a*<sub>1</sub>". Only if "*a*" is completely itself, is in its full-being, can we obtain the naught.<sup>16</sup> Each "*a*" that we take from a given "*a*" is already distinct from the original "*a*..." Only when "*a* ≡ *a*" is there

$$a - a = 0$$

This is only the case with Being, not with any existing thing.

$$A - A = 0$$

<sup>14</sup> The naught (*sānya*) was used around the second century before Christ in India, although other scholars give the fifth century after Christ. Chronology is not India's strong point. In any case, the *Aryabhatiya* (499 after Christ) already develops a modern arithmetic, although the great Indic mathematician Brahmagupta lived around 628. The latter had also come up with an operation:  $a \times 0 = 0$ , and he represented the infinite as  $a/0$ , although Bhāskara (1150) was perhaps the first person to call the result of *khahara* (naught as denominator) *ananta-rāśi*, i.e., infinite. See Singh, op. cit., 431ff.

<sup>15</sup> See my "Singularity and Individuality: The Double Principle of Individuation," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 111–112, nos. 1/2 (1975): 141–65.

<sup>16</sup> See my "Die Null: Urgestalt des Nichts," in J. Tenzler (ed.), *Urbild und Abglanz* (Regensburg, 1972), 175–78.

We also then have:

$$A = A - 0$$

If we reach that "A" completely identical with itself (Indic wisdom says), we have then "discovered" *brahman*. From "what is *a*?", we come to "what am I?", for we can deal with no "*a*" so well as with ourselves. From "what am I?", I finally arrive at "I am," at *I*, which can be only *brahman*: *ātman-brahman*! This naturally does not mean that my *Ego* is *brahman*. Only *brahman* can be *brahman*—and say so.<sup>17</sup>

The formula

$$A = A - 0$$

expresses what the Western tradition received from the *Liber XXIV Philosophorum*,<sup>18</sup> then was repeated by Meister Eckhart<sup>19</sup> and Nicholas of Cusa<sup>20</sup>: "Deus est oppositio ad nihil mediatione entis (God is the opposition to nothingness through the mediation of the concrete existing thing) (*ens*)."

$$Deus - 0 = Esse$$

If we turn the formula around:

$$A = A + 0$$

$$Deus = Esse + 0$$

we then have the classic paradigm of creation.

"After" the creation, there are more *entia* (existing things), but not more *Esse* (Being), the Scholastics say.

We now, however, keep on dealing with Nothingness. To obtain Nothingness, we must discover the identity of Being with its self, that is, only Being can obtain Nothingness. From without, Nothingness is unobtainable. Nothingness is the inverse, the identical inverse of Being. Being and Nothingness are indistinguishable from without. Both have the same characteristics. Only from within can both their identity and difference be recognized. But this difference is inexpressible. Nothingness is the identity of Being with itself. It is the self-identity of Being. This self-identity is a complete self-identity only when it is identity per se, that is, a Self that, however, is something different from bare identity. "Self" implies a reflection on one-self.

Is there, in fact, this power of reflection? Yes: consciousness (*Bewußt-Sein*, literally Conscious-Being). This consciousness is the other side of Being. But this consciousness is Nothingness when it is complete. Absolute consciousness is Nothingness; it negates Being. Expressed differently: pure Being is not even consciousness. *Brahman*, the *vedānta* says, does not even know that it is *brahman*. The self-consciousness of *brahman* is *Īvara*, who is indeed similar to *brahman* because he is *brahman*'s consciousness, but he is still the result of the split between Being and consciousness. This naturally means that the famous νοησις νοησεως (thought of thought) can never be complete. If it were

<sup>17</sup> See all of part VI in my study *The Vedic Experience* (London, 1977), 641–778, for an interpretation and translation of the main texts of the *Upaniṣads*. Vol. IV, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>18</sup> Proposition 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Sermo VI.1.53* (*Opera Omnia*, vol. IV [Stuttgart, 1936], 52); see also *In Sap.*, 90.

<sup>20</sup> *De docta ignorantia* II.2. See the expression of Śaṅkara: *sadāsatānirvacanīya*, "what you can express neither as Being nor as Non-Being."

complete, then it would be pure *νοησις*. Being is transparent to itself but Being is not merely this transparency.

Expressed in a Trinitarian way: Ultimate Reality does not let itself reduce to Being. There is also the Spirit, who is not subordinated to the *Logos*, and everything comes from the Father or the Origin. This Source is also different from the *Logos* even though it is inseparable—and therefore identical.<sup>21</sup>

We must ultimately ask ourselves from where, so to speak, the energy comes to carry out this operation of ontological subtraction. What is this power of negation (*Nichten*)? It can come only from Being itself. Only Being can negate (*nichten*) itself. Existentially said: only Being can annihilate (*vernichten*) itself. But Being can actually only *be*, that is, once again: Nothingness (*Nichts*) is only the other side of Being, and negation (*Nichten*) the counter-current of Being. On another level, the modern discussion about creating and uncreating, "*création et décréation*," also belongs here.<sup>22</sup>

#### *Avoiding Contradiction*

I can be very brief here because the whole history of philosophy abundantly deals with this issue. Nāgārjuna, Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, the *Kabbala*, and negative theology have discussed it, all of them treating the problem of how to deal with contradiction: God and the world, freedom and Being, finitude and infinity, the Trinity, a-dualism, creation, emanation, unity and plurality, and so on—all these concepts represent problems leading to contradiction when they are thought through consistently.

How does one overcome it? One can speak of *coincidentia oppositorum*, or the dialectical character of reality itself, or the weakness of our reason, or whatever. In any case, one confronts what Proclus called *σπερμα μη ουτος*, the seed of Non-Being.

There is "something" (*etwas*) that is not "some Thing" (*Etwas*). Better said: we come across a boundary that does not belong to the concrete object (*Sache*), but without which the object would not be an object. We discover, so to speak, "something" that cannot be.

We come here across the opposition between thinking and Being. The Nothingness, in fact, that emerges in contradiction cannot be because it is unthinkable, and yet apparently "is" because we come across it. If we decide for thinking, reality splits (the world cannot be real if God is real). If we decide for Being, then thinking is disempowered and is no longer trustworthy (if God is benevolent and omnipotent, then our criteria for the good all become invalid). In any case, Nothingness emerges everywhere, a Nothingness that follows neither Being nor thinking.

The usual wording says that *p* and non-*p* cannot be true at the same time. The one excludes the other. However, the question can be posed: why can both not be stated as true? The statement "*p* and non-*p*" is inexpressible simply because a contradiction cannot be stated. Given

$$p = \neg p$$

no statement is possible. With such paradoxical wordings proclaiming, "The sun shines = The sun does not shine" or "God exists = God does not exist," we can express nothing about the sun's shining or God's existence. Inexpressibility is the field of Nothingness.

These thoughts should be enough for the first part. I would now like to talk about the same thing in a completely different way.

<sup>21</sup> See my *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (New York, 1973). In Vol. VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>22</sup> See my "Creation and Nothingness: *Creatio ex nihilo sed non in nihilum*. Nothingness, *ad quem sed non a quo*," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 33 (1977): 346–352.

## A PARABLE

The first part of this story goes back to an oral tradition whose source I cannot establish. For the supplement and interpretation, I alone am "blameworthy." I do not need to remind you that, when someone tells a parable, he plays on a diachronic level, and synchronic, and any other kind of levels. *Intelligenti pauca* (few words suffice for those who understand).

In the sixteenth or seventeenth century, two Japanese Christians took an early-morning walk about the Emperor's garden in Kyoto. And lo and behold, in the morning fog, two figures approached. There was hardly time to think, yet the Christians recognized Jesus and the Emperor in friendly conversation. Suddenly, an unprecedented and intractable dilemma presented itself: "To whom should we bow first?" The gesture is essential; rituals are the core of life, we are far from a nominalist worldview. Loyalty to both simultaneously cannot be tolerated in that situation, so either apostasy (namely hell) or betrayal (namely death) looms. They are good Christians and also honorable Japanese. The symbol of bowing is the highest reality. I need not consider this here: worship, reverence, social bonds, respect, joy in communion, self-identity, salvation, and so on. Moreover, there is no time to philosophize; the two illustrious figures are already there. The older of the two Japanese whispered to the other, "Let's bow first to the Emperor. Jesus will surely understand!"

The dilemma cannot be resolved through thinking. The contradiction is unavoidable. The solution is existential: through a transgression, that is, a breaking (*Ver-brechen*), and the hope for the forgiveness that will make all things new. Only forgiveness can overcome causality, break the causal chain. We must risk putting everything at stake. The risk is all or nothing. It concerns Being or Nothingness, salvation or damnation. Only the person to whom I stand closest can forgive. Those two Japanese were good Christians. They had more trust in Christ than in the Emperor, which is why they sinned against Jesus. The person whom one loves more, one betrays and offends because only love has this unprecedented strength: it can forgive sins, overcome Nothingness, and dominate Being. Only the person whom I stand close to can forgive because the forgiveness (*Ver-gebung*) somehow comes also from my breaking the rules (*Ver-brechen*). I have not actually broken everything, and I would prefer being damned at the side of the beloved to being "beloved" in the distance, as the *bhaktas* show us. Judas was the disciple who loved Jesus most. His disappointment led him to despair.

Let us suppose that the two Christians had been Shinto Japanese instead. The tragedy would look different and the arguments differ. But I am sure that they would have bowed to Jesus first. A similar problem applies here even though courtesy is set on an ontological level. The Emperor should understand because he cannot disbelieve the loyalty of his subjects. Nothingness does not lie on the same level as Being.

In case, however, there had been two Zen monks, then I suspect that both would have plunged into meditation and sought and found the solution—and salvation—in the

immanence of that meditation itself. That is also a way out. I am sure that neither Jesus nor the Emperor would have had anything to raise against it. Is that not the *coincidentia oppositorum*? One finds a deeper dimension, and the contradiction is overcome or negated. Neither Being nor Nothingness (*Nichts*) is the Ultimate. The Ultimate is not, is *no-thing*, is annihilated (*vernichtet*).

We should not laugh at the following case because it also presents a legitimate solution. Let us suppose that the two had been young people of Japan today, or perhaps of antiquity. (Modernity is an old phenomenon.) I suspect in this case that those two young people would simply have run away, have fled, in other words, would have called upon transcendence or sought refuge in it. Here the problem is perhaps postponed, anyway it does not absolutely present itself as it can be seen on a lower level: "We must only try hard and compete. One cannot stand still." Being and Nothingness are dynamic symbols, they are boundary concepts; we are not allowed to manipulate them. "No one can see God and live." Humility is necessary.

I am telling a parable and not a joke. Why not imagine that there had been two artists? We will here have an artistic perspective on reality, insight into the world game, into the power of art and artistry, and thus into a not-yet-completed world, for it lies in our hands to complete it. I think that the more artistic of the two would have said, "You bow to the Emperor, I'll bow to Jesus"—and would have added in a whisper: "And everyone will be satisfied." The world is a game, metaphysics an illness, the seriousness with which some people view life, hubris. Being and Nothingness play with each other, secretly correspond with each other. The mistake lies in our humorless vision. In the end, the dilemma, the contradiction, the incompatibility between Being and Nothingness is a false problem. Everything depends on us. The great problems of the world have not been resolved, yet life goes on.

Let us return to the present and imagine two Japanese scientists—or perhaps also from that old time, for this type is widely distributed. One does not joke with scientists. There is no way out for them except *harakiri!* They must kill themselves. No modern technocratic power accepts to give up. Beginning with such a one-sided disarmament would be irrational. Technocratic logic does not allow for it. Being and Nothingness are both totalitarian. No compromise is possible. Either or. One must take a clear-cut decision.<sup>1</sup> There are of course certain final options. One must learn to respect them. Coexistence among metaphysicians, among people, systems, and nations . . . In the end, however, in an eschatological horizon, only catastrophe.

There are also naturally many other possibilities: two fanatics, for example, could try to murder either Jesus or the Emperor. There are people who say that either Being or Nothingness is a phantasm. One or the other must be put away. There is only what there is. Everything depends on what things are there for: for the senses or for reason, or for higher intuition. Here belong the monists of all kinds, who want to defeat every dualism, such that a separate dimension is not recognized or is reduced to the other one.

A wish to draw some typology from a parable would be contrary to its meaning. The elements of a typology might be contained there, but I have perhaps already packed too much interpretation into it.

I want to highlight only two characteristics. One is the element of novelty. A parable always deals with a new, unpredictable, and unimaginable situation that was not implicit in the data and thus cannot be treated as a mere consequence. What appears in the parable as a surprise is meant for us as the unpredictability of Reality, the incommensurability of Reality.

<sup>1</sup> To render the classic link, in German, between the verbs *entscheiden* (to take a decision) and *scheiden* (to divide). That in fact was the etymological meaning of *decidere* in Latin: "to cut."

It is beyond us, it comes toward us like the Emperor and Jesus. And something new is added, for even if the attempts fail or do not persuade us, they present something that emerges directly in the encounter. Genuine human confrontation with Reality is never sterile. Forgiveness, transcendence, immanence, negation, despair, rebellion, and so on—all the answers and opinions are possible solutions in the confrontation with Nothingness.

The second characteristic is the element of personal experience. I know that experience is a dangerous word. But one must embark upon the path. "Master, where do you live?" the disciples ask in that fateful initial encounter with the Master of Nazareth. This concerns the final question and the gate of last decision before they leave everything behind and follow him. The answer is brief: "Come and see," ερχεσθε καὶ οψεσθε.<sup>2</sup> It is literally the same expression of Buddhism to the question about *nirvāṇa*: "Come and see," *chipassikam*.<sup>3</sup>

This leads us naturally to contemplation as an activity that opens the door to reality for us. The dilemma<sup>4</sup> is unavoidable: Being either thinks itself through completely or not. In the first case, thinking corresponds to Being if thinking expresses Being and makes it intelligible. In this case, Being is thinkable, and the laws of thinking are simultaneously the laws of Being. As we think, we participate in Being. Truth is the bridge by which we *be-come*, reach Being.

In the other case, the correspondence is not perfect: thinking cannot (even purely theoretically) completely exhaust Being, mirror it entirely. Being manifests itself, unfolds itself, expresses itself in a way that thinking cannot follow. There is a radiance of Being that cannot be caught by thinking, that cannot be reflected upon, that so to speak "gets lost"; it is so matchless that it cannot be repeated at all because no iteration is possible.

"Thought-free meditation" would then be participation in this flow of "lost" Being, in Being itself, which can be neither thought nor determined. To be conscious of this participation is not possible and would constitute a fall from participation, for pure participation in the unfolding of the Whole necessarily excludes such a possibility. If I were "afterward" to think about such a "thought-free meditation," this would mean that it was not so empty and pure, for I can remember it, which means I can somehow catch it.

Thinking about a "being" thing (*ens*) undermines the thing thought about. It becomes a conceived and thereby fixed or at least altered thing, which can no longer move, change, and freely develop. It must adjust to what is thought; it would otherwise no longer be the thing thought about, but something else. The principle of identity surely enables thinking, but at the cost of the immovability of Being (*esse*). When Being is thought about, it forever remains as it is conceived, it has the characteristic of regularity. When I think, I may perhaps even create Being, but one thing I cannot do: make the conceived unconceived.

The movement of thought-free contemplation runs opposite the movement of thinking. This movement is not as if I, the meditating person, were to think about something, even if this something were the boundless openness of God. This movement is also not of the sort in which I seek to overcome thinking by springing over thinking's border or by obliterating that border. The movement of thought-free contemplation is exactly the opposite: the movement comes from the *Mysterion*, from Being itself. Praying persons do not speak; they hearken until they become pure obedience. They let the stream of Mystery (love, mercy, knowledge, light, Being, and God) flow through themselves.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 1:39.

<sup>3</sup> *Anguttara-nikāya* I.158 and also IV.453.

<sup>4</sup> From here up to the final lines of section 2 ("the Abyss"), the text cites from my own essay "Gedankenfreie Meditation oder seinserfüllte Gelassenheit?", first published in G. Stachel (ed.), *Munen Muso: Ungegenständliche Meditation* (Mainz, 1978), 311–12.

But take care! Such contemplation should see nothing. If that should be the case, then the thing seen would determine the seeing, and so not only rob the seeing of its freedom but also give it an object and a theme of thinking. A seen God is no longer the living God, the masters say. He is surely no longer the Seer, but at most the Seen. Pure observation observes nothing; even more: it does not observe. There is no object, but also no subject, no underlying basis, no point from which one could observe, no *pratiṣṭhā*, no ground, but only the Abyss.

# 3

## RETROSPECTIVE QUERY

### Various Thinking Styles

Humanity, as we ourselves have sensed in this colloquium, has various thinking styles that cannot be compared offhand because that is only possible from another and with another thinking style.<sup>1</sup> That prompts me to talk about various myths of which we think and speak. To understand those thinking styles, one must participate in the corresponding myth, that is, believe in that myth. Phenomenologically stated: to be able to present that which is believed, one must somehow believe in it, that is, the *noéma* becomes *pisteuma* here. All this demands a methodology *sui generis* in the encounter of religions. This methodology can be established only in the act of dialogical dialogue itself among the different traditions.

### Similar Thought Structures

Language, which simultaneously reveals and hides, which leads to understanding and misunderstanding, which exhibits various basic forms, nevertheless enables dialogue. We are not only speaking beings, we are also communicative beings.

There are just a few main directions that the human mind has discovered when it finds itself confronted by ultimate issues. Some of such fundamental stances are monism, dualism, and a-dualism (the last one together with pluralism).

*Ratio*, the intellect, is not able to exert its dominance alone over reality; the *logos*, however, should be neither neglected nor overestimated. We have here a negative guideline that should not be crossed, for meaninglessness otherwise threatens.

It is possible to devise "homeomorphic equivalents" that enable mutual understanding and mutual fruitfulness. These equivalents are a kind of analogy of the third degree. They are not similar concepts, they play not even similar roles. They are those symbols that play corresponding functions within each system of thought. For example, the concept *brahman* is no analogue to God: the two fulfill no similar function at all. The equivalence is rather homeomorphic because both fulfill corresponding roles in their own systems.

I will illustrate with a beautiful legend of Sufi master Hasan of Basra how thinking structures can be similar and thinking styles different.

*A child carried a candle.*

*I asked him: "From where does the light come?"*

*The child blew it out and said: "Now tell me, where is it gone?"*

<sup>1</sup> I may here refer to some of my writings: *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York, 1978); *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York, 1979); "Verstehen als Überzeugtsein," in H. G. Gadamer and P. Vogler (eds.), *Neue Anthropologie* (Stuttgart, 1975), 7:132–67.



## SECTION XIV

### THEOLOGY AS THEOPRAXIS\*

My reply<sup>1</sup> will both highlight and criticize the papers we have been listening to. Or rather, it will highlight the "experts" and criticize the "theologians." I will not comment on the single papers, excellent and revealing as they are. I will start from them and proceed to theologize. I will limit myself to three basic questions: *How should we see? What do we see? What can we do?* "We" are the so-called theologians, and the subject matter our situation, of course.

But, before doing it, I would like to tell you a story from President Nyerere<sup>2</sup> in order to set up the mood in which I would like to shape my reply. He is supposed to have said: "If we have to go barefoot in order to keep our independence and dignity, we will go barefoot. If we have to forgo any kind of technology because Western capitalism makes it prohibitive, we will do it with honor and pride. But if we have no food to eat, if our people starve, I will be the first to fall on my knees and knock at the door of anybody, including our enemies, and beg for food." ... Our situation is somewhat similar. If we indulge in theological discussions because we agree or disagree on many points, it is all well and good. But our situation today is that of lack of food. We cannot do business as usual and ignore, postpone, or minimize the predicament of those whom we call sisters and brothers and are victims of man-made injustices. This perspective is the top priority for an authentic theologizing today. We have heard enough so as not to forget what it is all about. Here then is my response.

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\* From *Socio-Cultural Analysis in Theologizing. The Statement, Papers and Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association* (Bangalore, December 28–31, 1986), edited by Kuncheria Pathil, Indian Theological Association (Bangalore, 1987).

<sup>1</sup> Due to the mishap of traveling, I could not present a written reply at the end of the meeting, nor write one later on, with the benefit of all my abundant notes. This text has been reconstructed from memory and will therefore lack all the qualities of a living response. It will limit it to its bare essentials.

<sup>2</sup> Julius Nyerere, the president of Tanganyika/Tanzania from 1964 to 1985.

## HOW SHOULD WE SEE?

### *A Theological Critique*

Apparently, we wanted to see by proxy. It seems as if we were in need of the reports of experts in order to be able to theologize. We want to hear from others how the situation is; we borrow the spectacles of the experts so as to see the situation out of which we would then like to start our theologizing. This is an unfair caricature, I know. Yet, it sets us in medias res. Is it not what many priests and many more laypeople criticize of the bishops and politicians? "They act from hearsay." This syndrome is not specifically ours. It is a feature of our times, in which knowledge has been downgraded to information. In short, we also are victims of the very fragmentation of culture, and especially of knowledge, that is typical of modernity. To put it briefly: the fragmentation of knowledge has brought about the fragmentation of the knower.

Those who are familiar with the *Upaniṣads* will immediately understand that I am situating all our enterprise within the context of the forty centuries of Indic civilization, and not merely the forty years of political nationhood.

Now back to the point: *How should we see? With our own eyes!* I elaborate on this idea from a theological, philosophical, and sociological standpoint.

#### Theologically

The sociocultural reality, of India in our case, and of any situation in general, is not a *locus theologiae*, but a *locus theologicus*. It is not a place that has been previously made ready for us in order to theologize, it is not a raw material out of which the theologian—by means of a superior kind of knowledge—will draw consequences and possibly spin theories. The theological activity is not a second-order activity, something we enter into once the "servants," the particular sciences, have prepared the ground for us. They should furnish the materials, then we should do the real work. This is a bad theology, or no theology at all, I submit.

This attitude does not do justice to the theological activity itself. In fact, theology is more than just mediation. Theology is not a superstructure imposed on things, an *adhyāsa*, a superimposition of something over and above reality because it enjoys the privilege of a new light belonging to a supernatural order. Theology has paid very dearly for the *reginae scientiarum hybris*.<sup>1</sup>

There are many problems here involved. I am not contesting, now, the theory of the natural and the supernatural orders, which, according to Vatican Council I, does not refer to an ontological but to an epistemological order: *duo modi cognoscendi*.<sup>2</sup> This is not my point

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<sup>1</sup> Pride for being the queen of sciences. [Ed. note.]

<sup>2</sup> Two ways of knowing.

here. I do believe that one thing is the *ratio* and another the *intellectus*, and even that there is something like the *ratio sive illustrata*.<sup>3</sup> I am not discussing the role of the *magisterium* either, although I recall Cardinal Ratzinger's critique of what he calls mere "theology of encyclicals" and defines as a bad theology. My point here is that the theological reflection is not a secondary elaboration on data furnished by somebody else (on our behalf, perhaps). It implies an awareness of the data, not a reflection on any "analysis" of them. The theological analysis is the immediate awareness of real situations, and not an analysis of analyses, or a second-hand reflection on them.

This is what is meant by saying that the sociocultural analysis is not a *locus theologiae* but a *locus theologicus* in itself and by its own merits, that is, a "place" where "theological truth" can be encountered. If this is the case, it does not mean that we can choose the "tools" of analysis that we like best, or that we go shopping to a sociocultural supermarket, but that theology itself is, among other things, such an analysis of reality. Similarly, as coming from real faith, and not from others', but as something immediately given (a free gift, in classical theological language), theology is not an interpretation of an interpretation, or interpretations of several interpretations. A theologian cannot skip the responsibility of seeing by himself, judging, evaluating, or simply believing by himself—or herself, of course.

This *locus theologicus* is the real situation of our fellow beings as we see, suffer, and experience it. It is the sharing with them in their strains and stresses. It is seeing with them and discovering, along with them, what the Spirit is telling us,<sup>4</sup> so to speak. The papers we heard were already several theologies. The division of labor does not apply to authentic theology. This is also why theology must always be concrete, limited, albeit not sectarian.

### Philosophically

There is something else to be said in criticizing the alleged furnishing of materials and pretending that they are pure data. What I am aiming at is the overcoming of a dualistic assumption both of reality and of the theological activity.

Reality is not a two-story building: the thing in itself, the naked data, and then the analysis of them. The datum itself is already an interpretation, the datum is a *factum*. Pure data do not exist. We all see according to our perceptions. What is *given* (*datum*) is already given to us, who receive it according to our particular capacity of assimilation. To put it another way, the analyses we have heard are not a *context* given neutrally to us for our further elaboration. They are the *text* itself; they also belong to reality, the reality expressed by those different experts. Each group of experts sees the situation differently, as we have heard, precisely because they construct reality by analyzing it, because their seeing is part and parcel of reality. Should we simply take and accept those analyses that we like, or consider plausible, because they tally with our preconceived ideas?

In other words, scientific analyses are already implicit theological interpretations of the human situation. Our task would then be not that one of retiring to our cells and pondering over what we have heard, so to speak, but entering in direct dialogue with those hidden theological assumptions of all those pretended data banks, and, in direct interaction with the experts, theologize together. In point of fact, this is what we did.

<sup>3</sup> Reason enlightened by faith.

<sup>4</sup> See Rev 2:7, etc.

### Sociologically

We do not need to be versed in sociology of knowledge to know that, in past times, the so-called theologian was at the same time the Man of particular knowledges. It was out of those insights into reality that our ancestors, East and West, worked out their theology, philosophy, *vijnāna*, *prajñā*, or whatever. Our current cultural situation makes this impossible today. The predominant modern culture is too imbued with specialization—unless we regain a new (because critical) holistic approach to reality.

This is a philosophical concern of my own, but of no interest now. It suffices to say that the fact of the radical mutation of our time requires a parallel mutation in the theological method. Our theological enterprise needs a new involvement, a new awareness, and thus a new approach. And I dare say that what brought us together here, people of so different specialties, is precisely this dim awareness that theology today requires a new understanding of itself. This is clumsily put. What I want to say is that we are all driven into one ultimate concern, in which the professional theologian is equally interested as the man in the street. The revitalization of theology comes, as always, from the people. It is not true that nowadays the people are not interested in theology. It is rather true that many theologians are not interested in the people. In spite of my critical remarks, our meeting has sufficiently proved that, at least for us, this is not the case. Theology is dialogical.

## 2

## WHAT DO WE SEE

*A Theological Reflection*

I would like to sum up a certain consensus in three points.

a. We see that the human being is not alone in the present-day predicament. From the back door, and negatively, we are led to remember that Nature is equally co-involved in the contemporary situation, that the Cosmos is not an alien factor in, or a passive onlooker of, the feats of Man. We recover, via ecology, a renewed cosmic sense of reality. Our theology should recover its cosmic features.

This brings me to an important point I already alluded to. It is a certain criticism of an oblivion—which has not been made on purpose, I guess, but which, once again, proves up to what extent we are children of our surroundings. Most of the papers dealt with the situation of the last forty years in the Indian nation-state without paying enough attention to the forty centuries of Indic civilization. The archetypes of the Indic subcontinent, I submit, are much more alive and powerful than most modern analyses would make us believe. We should not idealize the past, but we should not interpret the present only with our modern clues, either, and assume that the evolution of the culture of this subcontinent has to follow the Western route.

b. We see, further, a series of negative forces at work. They are of an anthropological and of a social nature.

*Anthropologically*, we detect Man's greed, selfishness, ignorance, superstition, besides suffering and poverty. *Karman*, original sin, or however we may call it, convinces us that there is evil at this level. Even in the most glorious and perfect societal scheme, Man is, and remains, capable of sin—in one word.

*Societally*, we have come to a certain consensus about the unjust structures of the present social system of India. We have detected the evils of the caste system, of capitalism, and the exploitation of the poor and of women. We have analyzed the deleterious effects of modern science and technology. I would have been much more severe, and criticized not only the factual misuses of science and technology, but submitted them to a more radical critique, denouncing them as perverse. But this is not my duty now.

Another aspect has been insufficiently treated, namely the structure of the nation-state as partially responsible for the state of affairs we all deplore. Yet the task of a respondent is not that of elaborating a paper of his own, but to react to the topics of the papers presented.

c. We have seen also scores of positive signs. I would like to divide them, again, into anthropological and societal.

*Anthropologically*, there is today an undiminished thirst for holiness, readiness for surrender to great causes, openness to high ideals. In this list we should include not only the Gandhis, Ambedkars,<sup>1</sup> and other national heroes, or the many saints we meet in our daily lives. We should also pay homage to the innumerable and anonymous godly people living in our century, especially among the humble. It is true that poverty does not lead to virtue. Poverty degrades. This is one of the reasons why we are so sensible to social injustices. And yet, it is equally true that our poor are still blessed and have not yet become miserable. We mentioned original sin and negative *karman*, but we must now mention the effective indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people, the realized *brahman* nature of so many of our brothers and sisters. And the same should be said regarding the Muslim, Jain, and other traditions in the country.

*Societally*, there are many positive signs as well. India is no longer that half-asleep and fatalistic country we sometimes hear of. The last forty years have created a tremendous awakening. All is still in turmoil and volcanic. But an increasing number of people come to their senses and try to make a new society. More than fifteen hundred "alternative" groups are legally active in India. Ecological awareness, *dalits*, women, fisher-folks . . . are so many names and symbols for this consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> The "father of the Constitution of India."

## 3

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

*A Theological Construction*

Not to sound too ambitious, I have not titled this third part: "What Is the Role of Theology?"—but it eventually boils down to it.

a. A theology deserving this name, I submit, must *denounce, protest, and criticize*. We cannot condone injustice, we should not keep silent before exploitation, we cannot remain passive in front of superstitions, those of the "right" as well as those of the "left." I do not need to elaborate on these points—perhaps with one exception, prompted by our overall theological situation. All too often, in our present times, have we dedicated a great part of our efforts to attacking those who do not conceive the mystery of Reality as we do, and wasted our time in purely doctrinal controversies. The sense of urgency (remember Nyerere) should not make us nervous or merely activists, but give us an insight on priorities. We have criticized the caste system and "communalism," and rightly so. Shouldn't we theologians, in this vast mosaic of the Indic subcontinent, ask for a moratorium, or at least a subdued tone, in all our "God-talk"?

b. And, conversely, a true theology has also to *build, to reconcile, and to act*. Finding everything faulty, being only critical, is self-defeating for any theological enterprise. Theology has to find a meaning for life even in nonoptimal conditions, and construct bridges of hope and patterns of humanness even in apparently desperate situations, without acting in any way as an opiate.

I would like to underscore here the task of reconciliation. I am not only referring to what I called *ecumenical ecumenism*, that is, finding the proper place of each tradition in the economy of salvation—in Christian parlance. I am thinking of a wider task, that of striving toward a *coincidentia oppositorum*.<sup>1</sup> It is a duty of theology to spell out the relativization of all our human standards, stressing our sense of contingency, provisionality, and humility. It belongs essentially to theology not only to be concrete and limited, but also to develop the attitude of letting the sun shine on sinners and just alike.<sup>2</sup>

Theology should side—with the poor and oppressed, concretely—but not be partisan. Precisely because we are somewhat concerned with the Ultimate, we should keep alive the sense of the penultimate everywhere.

And finally, theology should not be satisfied with orthodoxy. We need orthopraxis, and its corresponding *theopraxis*. I mean, of course, much more than inciting others to put into

1 Coincidence of the opposites.

2 See Mt 5:45.

practice what "we" preach. I mean that our theology implies and requires a *theopraxis* in ourselves as an essential part of the theological activity. In this sense, I feel that our meeting has been extremely fruitful. The papers were full of experience and life.

c. To conclude, our task may be summed up in three headings: to identify the main issues, to examine the positive paths, and to put the whole thing into praxis. *Theologia vitae*,<sup>3</sup> as it was called by Thomas Aquinas. This needs the collaboration of all.

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3 The theology of life.

## SECTION XV

### WHAT IS COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY COMPARING?

Comparative studies are still fashionable today because they belong to the thrust toward universalization characteristic of Western culture. The West, being unable to dominate other peoples politically any longer, tries to keep—mostly unconsciously—a certain control by striving toward a global picture of the world by means of comparative studies. Yet this very thrust toward homogenization and "global thinking" may boomerang into decentralization and pluralism once the wisdom of other cultures becomes better known. Paradoxically enough, comparative philosophy, which has an inbuilt trend to overcome the plurality of cosmovisions, may end up legitimizing mutually irreconcilable systems and becoming the stronghold of pluralism.

I offer here a definition of comparative philosophy and argue that it is different from all other comparative studies by virtue of its own subject matter. And this uniqueness finds its paradoxical expression in my thesis that, strictly speaking, comparative philosophy is an impossible independent discipline that nevertheless thrives on the very recognition of its impossibility.<sup>1</sup>

Nāgārjuna saw a number of systems (*dṛṣṭis*) before him; he undertook to criticize them all, but he did not create any comparative philosophy. Similarly, Aristotle frequently began his work by describing the opinions of his predecessors, but his philosophy was not comparative philosophy. Descartes was bewildered by the multiplicity of philosophical systems in his time and "ex-cogitated" a method to get rid of all those doubts; but he would not have dreamed of writing comparative philosophy. Śaṅkara and Thomas Aquinas were aware of the wide disparity of opinions and used this argument to show the convenience of *sraddha* and *fides*, respectively, but they did not do comparative philosophy. If comparative philosophy must have a status of its own, it should be neither a mere history of philosophy nor simply a philosophy based on the critique of previous philosophies. Otherwise, we give only a new name to an old discipline. In that case, every critical philosophy is comparative philosophy, because it compares itself with other systems of thought and builds on those analyses.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the thesis of my paper "Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of Religion," *Man and World* 3–4 (1980): 357–83. In Vol. II of this *Opera Omnia*.

Comparative philosophy has an illustrious forerunner to which it owes much of its existence and which is, at least partially, responsible for its success: comparative philology. The birth of comparative philology in the middle of the nineteenth century was the means for Western scholarship to come out of the shell of provincialism and broaden its understanding of something so fundamentally human as language. Comparative Philology is possible, though it does not pretend to be a meta-language. Max Müller's inaugural lecture at Oxford University was delivered in 1868, but already twelve years earlier he had written about "comparative mythology."<sup>2</sup> And it was Pope Clement V in 1311 who created in four European universities (Paris, Oxford, Bologna, and Salamanca) as well as in Rome, chairs of Hebrew, Chaldean, and Arabic.<sup>3</sup> From then on, the ferment did not die, but comparative philology deals with an issue that is quite different from that of comparative philosophy.

The independent status of comparative philosophy should be distinguished from the conventional notions of comparison used by all systematic thinkers. We always need to express our thoughts against the background of some other opinions, explicitly or implicitly stated. Every philosopher, willy-nilly, is in dialogue with the surrounding philosophical world (or some other ancient one). When Kant writes his *Critique*, he does it as a "Copernican revolution," reacting against the previous forms of philosophizing. When Śāṅkara expounds his system, he equally starts an open polemic against the *karmakāṇḍins*, the Buddhists, and others. In this sense, every philosophy is comparative philosophy because it compares itself—and seemingly successfully—with other philosophical views. But this is not the specific understanding of comparative philosophy, which claims to be an autonomous discipline. It claims thematically to compare two or more or all philosophical views, and give them a fair treatment without—at least ideally—necessarily subscribing to any of them.

In this paper I examine the claim of comparative philosophy to be an independent discipline with its proper method and subject matter, which liberates us from the limited horizon of one single philosophical view and encompasses all (or most) of them, making us really "citizens of the world," "inhabitants of this planet." This is the illusion I would like to dispel, that is, One World Government, One Global Village, One Technology, One World Market, One Civilization, one *lingua universalis*, one worldview, a universal philosophy called comparative philosophy . . . in short, the mono-morphism of a monolithic reality.

We may now ask what is the state of affairs about comparative philosophy. From the name itself we may assume that it is a kind of philosophy. We may also assume that comparative philosophy is that philosophy that results from, or deals with, comparing philosophers. We ask then: what kind of philosophy is comparative philosophy? And immediately we have to ask further: What is the state of affairs about philosophy? Is it a philosophical question? Or does the question not belong to philosophy?

The questions about the ultimate foundations of poetry, geography, walking, or loving do not belong to poetry, geography, walking, loving. They traditionally belong to philosophy. Now, the question about philosophy either belongs to philosophy itself or to a sort of meta-discipline that disclaims to be philosophy, for a member of a set cannot encompass or evaluate the whole set. What is it then? One may answer that it is linguistics or history. But, then, we may still inquire about the state of linguistics or history, and begin

<sup>2</sup> Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1902).

<sup>3</sup> See *Concilii Viennensi* (1311–1312) *decretem* 24, in *Conciliarum oecumenicorum decreta* (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 1973), 379.

all over again. We would need a particular linguistic or historical theory over any other one. It would require a special comparative linguistics or history based on something else, and so on ad infinitum.

We may well accept, then, that there is a human activity that wonders about the very nature of asking and reflects about those final questions. Traditionally, philosophy deals with this problem. We may then answer not just by saying that to inquire about philosophy is a philosophical question, but that this type of inquiry is the specific, constitutive feature of philosophy itself. Aristotle had already suggested this when speaking about that science that looks at its own foundations.<sup>4</sup> "How to know the knower?" and not just things, asked similarly the *Brhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*. It is interesting to remark, incidentally, that Greece asks impersonally about the nature of knowledge: Greece wants to know *knowledge*. India asks with a personal and existential urge about the nature of the knower. India wants to know the *knower*.<sup>5</sup>

Here begins the classical problem of the very nature of philosophy. On the one hand, it wants to tackle ultimate questions about the nature of reality. On the other hand, it asks the further question about the nature of its own enterprise. It asks about its own asking. "Philosophy starts in reflective consciousness," as the post-Kantian philosopher K. C. Bhattacharya used to say,<sup>6</sup> echoing the *Vedas* ("What I am, I do not know") and the *vedānta* ("What I am?") as well as Augustine ("Quaestio mihi factus sum") and many others.

Comparative philosophy is a peculiar kind of philosophy comparing philosophies. The difficulty is: What kind of philosophy is it? A philosophy that passes judgment on all the others, or a meta-philosophy that amounts to another philosophy? The dilemma seems insurmountable.

Having reflected on the word "philosophy," we should now ponder on the meaning of "comparative." Grammar cannot easily be whisked away. Why do we say "comparative philosophy" and not "compared philosophy" as the Romance languages do (*filosofia comparada*, not *comparativa*), or "comparing philosophy" (*vergleichende Philosophie*, not *vergleichene*) as the Germanic languages suggest?

"Comparing philosophy" would be a philosophy that thematically proceeds by means of comparisons with other philosophies from the standpoint of the one philosophy that undertakes the comparisons. "Compared philosophy" would be the result of the process of a philosophy comparing itself with other philosophies. Is this all that there is in "comparative philosophy"?

Perhaps the entire phrase is an elliptic expression standing for "Comparative Science of Philosophy," as we have *vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* or *science comparée des religions*. These two latter sciences may exist, but do we have a "science" that compares philosophies? Is this "science" not already "philosophy"? The question is the essential one.

The first answer is simple. Comparative philosophy is philosophy and, *qua* philosophy, it is not better than any other philosophy. It is simply another philosophy, with all related limitations. If there is no universal language, there is also no universal comparative philosophy. But we have to qualify this statement in a critical way.

The question about comparative philosophy may be a philosophical question, but it is a specific one. It does not inquire about the nature of reality, or about the essence of questioning

<sup>4</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.2 (982b8).

<sup>5</sup> See *BU* II.4.14; III.4.2; IV.5.15.

<sup>6</sup> K. C. Bhattacharya, "The Concept of the Absolute," in G. B. Burch, ed., *Search for the Absolute in Neo-Vedanta* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 175.

in general. It asks about one very particular and still problematic kind of philosophy, namely the so-called comparative philosophy. The specific question should be clear. Comparative philosophy is that alleged philosophy that compares existing philosophies. The question about comparative philosophy asks not only about its epistemic status and its philosophical characters, but also about its place in the philosophical enterprise.

The real problem is the second one: what do we ask about, when we ask about the nature of comparative philosophy?

We ask about how one philosophy relates to another, or how several philosophical schools relate to one another, or how they envision one or many particular problems, how these problems interrelate, and how we can compare them, so that a certain typology may emerge which may lead us to a deeper understanding of what is the case. We ask how the different thinkers have interpreted the task of philosophizing, and what presuppositions they brought with them. But, in so doing, we become aware that we also are doing the same, namely, bringing our own assumptions into our research. Therefore, a critical comparative philosophy will have to ask about the kind of philosophy or philosophical attitude it assumes when doing comparative philosophy.

In the contemporary scene we find several interpretations of comparative philosophy. They all depend on the implicit philosophy that underlies the inquiry. I will examine five types: transcendental philosophy; formal or structural philosophy, linguistic philosophy, phenomenological philosophy, and dialogical or *imparative* philosophy, endeavoring to understand, compare, and eventually evaluate the vision of different philosophical schools regarding philosophical problems.

A working definition of comparative philosophy may run as follows: the philosophical study of one or some problems in the light of more than one tradition. But, obviously, what one understands by philosophical study depends already on the kind of philosophy one embraces. Furthermore, we use already certain philosophical categories of understanding even in choosing the traditions under study—whence the need to clarify the issue of the implicit philosophy in any comparative philosophy.

I will argue that all these opinions give us a different type and understanding of comparative philosophy, but ultimately none provides us with a satisfactory basis for a truly independent comparative philosophy. Yet, all of them together will give us a panorama of the strength and weakness of this (new?) discipline, which is still searching for its own identity and justification. And, as I have said, its nature consists in striving for an ideal that must be recognized as impossible.

Whatever philosophy may be, *comparative* philosophy has to be comparative to be true to its name. It has to put on a universal scale the different self-understandings of the diverse philosophies. To compare is an activity of the human mind that takes a neutral stance toward the things to be compared. Any comparison has somehow to transcend its subject matter.

For any comparison, three things are required: at least two *comparanda* (the things to be compared), and the *comparans*, which is an element that has to be equally distant from and outside the *comparanda*. And here does already loom, unambiguously, the idea of *transcendence*, which some philosophies would like to avoid. If philosophy could only be handled from a superhuman standpoint, it would need an Archimedean fulcrum outside the contending parties. Now, without explicitly recurring to a transcendent deity, comparative philosophy appears to be a sort of transcendental philosophy. It appears as a philosophy that studies the possible conditions of its own philosophizing, which questions the very status of all philosophical assertions in the light of the unity of consciousness in the very act of

knowing. It claims to be that philosophy that underlies the ultimate activity of the human mind reflecting on its own functioning. It would be an *a priori* philosophy, and in that sense a meta-philosophy.

This is a valid critical philosophy. But can it be called *comparative*, when it already assumes a conception of philosophy that may perhaps be the most comprehensive one, but is certainly not universal? The viewpoint of comparative philosophy has to be surely transcendent, but it needs to be also neutral, unbiased.

We may have here a valid evaluation of philosophies, and I may be able to draw *for myself* a convincing comparative philosophy. But the name "comparative philosophy" seems improper, for it should be fair to the philosophies compared, and some of them will not accept my judgment about them because it is based on a scale of values that they do not recognize. In other words, I have to compare philosophies when trying to sort out my own philosophy, but is this *comparative* philosophy, or only homework for my own philosophy?

One may reply that transcendental philosophy, which claims to be a sort of *a priori* of philosophy, could well perform the job of comparing philosophies, for it provides a proper platform, even if not accepted by all the philosophies concerned. This may be a convincing comparative philosophy *for me*, but it does not fulfill one of the constitutive rules of comparative philosophy, if the latter must have no specific identity. The subject matter of comparative philosophy is not the traditional object of philosophy—namely reality, truth, or the like—but only a very specific aspect, that is, it should not reduce the knowers or understanders to objects known or understood (by us). Comparative philosophy cannot accept a method that reduces all those insights to the view of one single philosophy.

Historically speaking, comparative philosophy developed as an offshoot of Comparative Religion, and the latter was based on the belief in the transcendence of reason vis-à-vis all religious phenomena. As a result, reason was considered qualified to evaluate religions, so it could proceed to their comparison based on a transcendental, rational scale. Similarly, assuming that philosophies are also the product of reason, a kind of pure reason would be qualified to act as the *comparans* in the realm of philosophies.

The two major objections to such an interpretation are, on the one hand, the very many aspects and forms of rationality, and, on the other hand, the fact that many philosophies do not understand themselves to be just *apud rationis*, without for that matter being irrational.

A transcendental philosophy may be too ambitious to perform the role of comparative philosophy. Perhaps a simply structural or formal philosophy may then be a kind of formalized analysis of the common patterns present in the diverse philosophical systems. And, in fact, many of the efforts to build a genuine comparative philosophy take on this form nowadays.

I will not here criticize this attempt on its own merits. But it has a heavy set of presuppositions. It assumes that anatomy is sufficient for physiology, as it were. It assumes, further on, that the relations between philosophies or philosophical opinions can be formalized in a kind of algebra, as if the inner dynamism of philosophies were all dependent on mathematical laws. In other words, it assumes the translatability of philosophical insights into formalized formulas, it equates mathematical consistency with full-fledged human understanding, and so forth.

What transcendental philosophy claims to do in the realm of consciousness, this more formal philosophy wants to perform in the field of patterns. We may thus come to common structures and even be able to formulate some laws and detect some patterns of behavior or

thought. We could describe useful structural paradigms of the ways in which the different philosophies have proceeded in their attempts to decipher the nature of reality. We could accomplish a kind of comparison of the structural patterns that underlie several philosophies, and therefore shape a "typography" (rather than typology) of philosophical systems . . . but this could not be called philosophy. It is rather structural analysis.

But structural analysis only offers a reductionistic basis for comparative philosophy. Why should reality blindly comply with structural laws? Why should the laws of the mind be identical with the laws of reality—provided it makes sense to speak of the latter?

Further, structural analysis does not address itself to most issues of traditional philosophies. (a) Transcendental philosophy is too much of a philosophy, as it were, to perform the task of comparative philosophy. (b) Structural analysis is too little of a philosophy for the same task. Yet both are useful, the former to give us a more sophisticated philosophical understanding of the variety of philosophies, the latter to unveil patterns and structures of the human spirit as functioning in diverse contexts.

(c) A third option is that of linguistic philosophy, which is not synonymous with linguistic analysis. Each philosophy can be equated with a language. After all, every philosophy uses a language, and we are able to understand several languages and even compare them in different perspectives. Yet the difficulty lies, again, in the fact that the chosen perspective, whatever it may be, is not philosophically neutral as it would be required to play the role of a truly comparative philosophy.

The great merit of this option, however, is that it shows the relative autonomy (or rather, *ontonomy*) of each philosophy and its relative completeness. Each language is somewhat autonomous and internally complete. This option makes us aware that, in order to understand, we do not need properly to compare, for we do not bring the *comparanda* on a neutral scale, but bring one *comparandum* into the field of intelligibility of the other—in other words, we translate. Translation means finding the corresponding equivalences (homeomorphic equivalents) between languages.

But in order to discover the equivalences, we need a third element that bridges the several universes of discourse. We require a triple understanding: the grasping of the meaning of a word in one language, its English equivalents (if English is the other language), and a creative intuition that will allow the translator to float for a while above the languages before landing on the right or approximate expressions. Each translation transforms both the host language, by means of the new shades of meaning and associations of the newly translated word, and the language from which the translation is made.

Yet when translation obstacles are surmounted, the real problem for a linguistic comparative philosophy lies elsewhere. It lies in the problem of really understanding contradictory statements. We may be able to speak the language, say, of the *ātmavādins* and, with some skills, we may even succeed in speaking the language of the *anātmavādins*. But when it comes to comparison after expounding the arguments of either side, we will have to stop at two basically incompatible visions of reality. We may even conjecture that psychology, geography, education, or other factors have predisposed peoples or cultures to take one of the visions, but this hypothesis will not bridge the gap. We should then compare the viewpoints from a third, independent platform, which is ours but not theirs. At best, we will have an explanation of the different systems, a kind of history of philosophy that is linguistically based. But this is not yet comparative philosophy. A list of contradictory statements does not make philosophy, even though we may have gained very valuable philosophical insight.

Very often, what goes under the name of comparative philosophy are single comparisons of the way in which a particular philosophical problem is envisaged by more than one

philosophical school. We may study, for instance, the different uses of and conceptions about *pramāṇas* in the classical Indic *darsanas*, or the theory of causality in the philosophies, both Eastern and Western, that have followed this theory. We may compare, criticize, and illuminate different aspects of the problem of causality by drawing from the various insights of the system concerned.

A certain phenomenological method underlies this option. Phenomenology here is the implicit philosophy. We compare phenomena, concepts, as states of consciousness against a common background offered by phenomenological analysis, and we may reach important cross-cultural insights.

This method gives a fruitful contribution to comparative philosophy inasmuch as it offers us transversal visions of similar problems in different philosophical systems, but it cannot give us a substitute for a truly independent comparative philosophy for two main reasons. The first one is that each particular problem plucked out of its proper *humus* or context does not represent the real problem of the philosophical worldview concerned, but only our interpretation of it (modern scientific causality applied to astrology, for instance). Second, not even the sum total of all the philosophical problems would give us the unity of vision that most philosophies have. What we have at most could be called a certain philosophy inasmuch as phenomenology is philosophy. But a phenomenology of philosophies is not the same as comparative philosophy.

A fifth option is what can be called dialogical philosophy or *imparative* philosophy. The main difficulty with comparative philosophy is precisely its point of departure. Any effort to compare philosophies starts, consciously or unconsciously, from a concrete philosophical position. What we have in fact is a philosophical stance that opens itself up to other philosophies and tries to understand them from the initial perspective—though it changes in the process. This enterprise is only possible in dialogue with other philosophical views. It should further cultivate an attitude of learning from all of them. In medieval Latin this process was called *imparare*: thus the name of “*imparative* philosophy,” in order to stress an open philosophical attitude ready to learn from whatever philosophical corner of the world, but without claiming to compare philosophies from an objective, neutral, and transcendent vantage point.

*Imparative* philosophy suggests that

1. We should, first, be aware that most philosophies regard themselves as unique and often as ultimate. Thus we cannot justifiably compare, that is, bring together (*com-*) on an equal (-*par-*) footing that which purports to be unique and incomparable.
2. We may instead *imparare*, in other words: learn by being ready to undergo the different philosophical experiences of other people.<sup>7</sup>
3. This learning is reflective and critical, because it takes into account the commutative human experience up to the present time, and subjects everything to a critical scrutiny with all the available tools of analysis, thus maintaining an openness and provisionality for the time being. *Imparative* philosophy would be that philosophical

<sup>7</sup> *Imparare* is a nonclassical Latin verb: *in-parare*. *Parare*: to prepare, furnish, provide. *Comparare* has the same sense of making things ready, thus to arrange. *Paratus sum*: I am ready, disposed. We may note the *par*, equal, from which comes the *comparare* of comparative religion; and *paro*, I set, I put, from which the *imparare* of *imparative* religion is derived. The *imparare* of *imparative* religion suggests the opposite to the *dis-antepare* of medieval Latin, from which comes the Spanish *desamparo*, dereliction, despair. *Imparative* religion does not formally compare, but brings together, piercing the appearances and overcoming the dispersion and despair of the *prima facie* antagonistic tendencies and tenets.

attitude that is convinced that we cannot escape taking a stand somewhere when we philosophize, and that such limitation makes our philosophizing relative to similar enterprises undertaken from different perspectives. *Imparative* philosophy does not pretend to possess a fulcrum outside time and space and above any other philosophy, from which to scrutinize the different human philosophical constructs.

4. *Imparative* philosophy is critically aware of the contingency of its own assumptions and the unavoidable necessity of resting on both limited and still unexamined presuppositions.<sup>8</sup> We are not the only source of (self-)understanding.
5. It is constitutively ready to question its most basic foundations, if this is requested by any other philosophical school. Nothing is nonnegotiable.
6. Its first thematic concern is the search for the primordial ground of philosophizing.
7. It is open to a dialogical dialogue with other philosophical views, not only to dialectical confrontation and rational dialogue.
8. It tries, furthermore, to form its philosophical view of reality by systematically taking into account the universal range of human experience, inasmuch as it is possible to do so in any concrete situation.

I have already indicated that such an *imparative* philosophy may be the best way of performing one of the aims of so-called comparative philosophy, namely to overcome provincially chauvinist views, to cultivate tolerance and understanding of the richness of human experience, but I still wonder whether that can be strictly called comparative philosophy.

There may be other implicit philosophies in other existing comparative philosophies, but these examples should suffice to show that there is not an independent comparative philosophy as a discipline of its own.

We may ask, further on, whether it would be possible to get a proper comparative philosophy by combining all the implicit philosophical attitudes. The answer is a clear "no," for this would amount to raising the question whether we can have a comparative philosophy of comparative philosophies. It would simply shift the problem to a third-degree comparative philosophy of second-degree comparative philosophies, and so on ad infinitum, for there is no reason whatever why the comparative philosophy of comparative philosophies should be only one.

What we actually have is a plurality of philosophies and of comparative philosophies, each of them claiming ultimate truths? Comparative philosophy is consciously or unconsciously prompted by such a question.

We could formulate it this way. Can we pass from a *de facto* *plurality* of philosophies (or comparative philosophies) to a *de jure* philosophical *pluralism*? This problem is an important one in our times and a central philosophical question, with very practical and vital consequences in all the branches of human activity. It is obvious that philosophical pluralism cannot be just a super-philosophy, a kind of meta-philosophy, for practically every philosophy claims to possess an ultimate character in its own sphere. Further, by its very nature, pluralism does not allow any super-system of meta-philosophy. Pluralism is not concerned with multiplicity or diversity as such, but with the incommensurability of human constructs on homologous issues. The problem of pluralism touches the limits of the intelligible (not just for us, but in itself). It poses the greatest challenge to the human spirit. It touches the shores of the Ineffable, and thus of silence.

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<sup>8</sup> We are conscious of our assumptions, not of our pre-subpositions. We can see what we have in front of us (*pre*) but not what lies at the very basis (*sub*) of what we "suppose."

The comparison of philosophies implies an understanding of them; or, in other words, the process demands a proper hermeneutic activity. I submit that the proper method here is a special kind of hermeneutics different from the *morphological* and the *diachronic* types. I call it "diatopic" hermeneutics.

Diatopic hermeneutics is the fitting method of interpretation when the distance to overcome, needed for any understanding, is not just a distance within one single culture (morphological hermeneutics) or a temporal one (diachronic hermeneutics), but rather the distance between two (or more) cultures (*topoi*) with their own methods of philosophizing and ways of reaching intelligibility, along with their proper categories.

The great problem in such a hermeneutic approach is the peculiar type of one's own philosophical world. This problem already exists within a single culture, but in this case we have something specifically different. Here we are under a different *mythos* or horizon of intelligibility. We understand because we are within a hermeneutic circle. But how can we understand something that does not belong to our circle? If I smile to a monkey in a sign of friendship, the monkey is likely to attack me. He sees my teeth and interprets my behavior as a sign of warning before I bite him. If I move the head vertically up and down, some people understand that I agree, and others that I disagree. The "limit" was considered a suitable symbol of perfection by the Greeks, because it was intelligible; in India, it would be the opposite. In other words, how do we communicate prior to handing on (this is tradition) the key to decipher our message? And how can we understand the meaning of the clue given us? By what other symbol? Can we ask for an ultimate key?

If we take other philosophies seriously as sources of self-understanding and independent views of the universe, we cannot minimize this problem and assume that everybody speaks an Indo-European language or lives in a Euclidean geometrical world, or in an animistic universe. The West may have rejected, on the mental plane, the idea that humankind has come from Adam and Eve as a single pair, but many of its spontaneous reactions still come from the acceptance of that myth. So we speak of a universal reason and of the unity of human nature, although we mean, obviously, *our own* conception of universality, reason, and human nature. Diatopic hermeneutics has to proceed without necessarily assuming these myths as a priori conditions of intelligibility.

In a word, how can we cross the boundaries, for the first time, toward another totally independent culture? It may be retorted that the question is theoretical, for this "first time" is already gone. We have already entered into contact with one another. Granted that this is mostly the case, there exist—though not in an absolute sense—cultures and philosophies that have created their own understanding of the universe without major historical influences. The problem is theoretical, and it is useful to clarify the very principles of diatopic hermeneutics, for we have constantly to deal with people who have misunderstood what another philosophy is trying to say. They have interpreted it according to their own categories and missed the point of the original philosophy. In point of fact, to dispel misunderstandings is one of the major tasks of comparative philosophy. How many cheap opinions are still in circulation in the world today, except among selected minorities, about African religions, for instance, or even about the great historical religions!

Taking a hint from *vedic* wisdom, as developed mainly in the *mīmāṃsā*, I would like to propose the *apauruṣeya* insight as a main principle of diatopic hermeneutics.

According to the *apauruṣeya* insight, the *Vedas* have no author—not because no scribe or poet ever uttered those words for the "first time," but because they are primordial language containing primordial words and, thus, with no need for some author behind them to explain

what they mean. If this were not the case, the author should explain the meaning of the text through another language, and so on ad infinitum. The *Vedas* stand for the primordial symbols by means of which we know what is existentially important and by means of which we also come to know other things. The sense of a symbol is in the symbol itself. If we needed another symbol to explain its sense, this second "thing" would be the real symbol. *Apauruṣeya* stands for primordial language, a language that does not need another form of language in order to communicate what it means.

The human being is an *animal loquens*, but we do not speak "language." We speak a language, and other people speak another language that we do not know. The primordial language is hidden in our respective languages—not as a language, of course, but as *language*. In the effort of communicating with one another (at the beginning, without proper understanding, then slowly by dispelling false imaginations and misconceptions), we forge a common language, we reach a mutual comprehension, we cross the boundaries. This is what I call "dialogical philosophy." It is not the imposition of one philosophy or one mode of understanding, but the forging of a common universe of discourse in the very encounter, in the dialogical dialogue taking place not one time for all, but in the actual encounter.

We do not assume any hermeneutic circle here. We create that circle though the existential encounter. We do not start a dialectical dialogue, which accepts *a priori* some rules before the dialogue takes place. The theory here cannot be severed from the praxis.

Diatopic hermeneutics is not just theory. The rules here do not precede the understanding, nor does theory precede the praxis. At the same time, the praxis implies the theories of the meeting partners. Both are present and required.

In sum, how can we reduce to zero, or at least shorten, the distance between the two *topoi* of "dia-topic" hermeneutics? The answer is one in which theory and praxis meet. Only those who, for one reason or another, have existentially crossed the borders of at least two cultures, and are at home in either, will be able first to understand and then to translate. Diatopic hermeneutics are not universal. They function, generally speaking, between two different *topoi*, not between many. They bring one culture, language, philosophy, into another culture, language, or religion, making it understandable. Diatopic hermeneutics is an art as much as a science, a praxis as much as a theory. It is a creative encounter, and there is no blueprint for creativity.

Diatopic hermeneutics cannot prescribe specific rules of interpretation. If we want to interpret another, basically different philosophy, we will have to attend the school of that philosophy and immerse ourselves into its universe of discourse as far as it is possible for us. We will have to overcome our parameters and plunge into a participatory process, of which we may not be able to foresee the outcome. The process may be likened to that of learning a new language. At the beginning, we translate by comparing the text with the mother tongue, but, when we become proficient, we think and speak directly in that other linguistic universe. The *topoi* are connected by simply going over there and actualizing the encounter. The process could be likened to an authentic process of conversion (to the other philosophy). Mutual fecundation may take place.

It will be observed that we have not used formulas like "common human nature," "primitive revelation," "elementary needs," "unity of the human race," or "one Creator God," because our problem is previous to all those explanations and persists even without the mentioned hypotheses. One "nature," "revelation," "tradition," "God," or whatever unifying factor does not exonerate us from the inescapable burden of understanding those words and having our personal notion of what they mean. But our interpretation does not need to be "theirs," so we

can understand human nature very differently and cannot postulate a priori that the others have the same understanding as ours. In a word, how do we interpret their interpretation, if we do not possess a priori the key to their code? It is only in doing, in the praxis, that diatopic hermeneutics works.

Coming now back to my point of departure, I recall my thesis that an independent discipline called comparative philosophy is not possible, strictly speaking. Yet, we cannot deny the existence of a growing discipline under this apparently auspicious name. It grows while attempting precisely that impossibility. It attempts to overcome plurality.

What comparative philosophy tries to compare are the final myths on which certain cultures have constructed their worlds. Now, comparative mythology is understood as a comparison of legends and sacred stories. But there cannot be a neutral comparison of myths, because we all stay in a myth and we cannot eliminate the ultimate horizon where we situate ourselves in order to understand. As soon as we open our senses, mind, or spirit, or whatever name we may use, we do it within a myth in which we stay, and live, and have our awareness.

In other words, comparative philosophy, qua philosophy, makes us aware of our own myth by introducing us to the myth of others, and by this very fact it changes our horizon. When we discover our own horizon, it ceases to be such, and immediately appears as another horizon. Comparative philosophy does not de-mythologize, it transmythologizes. It transforms our myth as soon as we discover it as such. It saves us from falling into the fallacy of believing that all the other people lie in "myths" except us. Comparative philosophy, as philosophy, is a continuous process. If we expect definitive results, we will be frustrated; our world would cease to exist. The very failure of the project of a truly comparative philosophy as the judgment of all philosophies discloses its real nature.

For too long, philosophy in the modern West, the cradle of the new "comparative philosophy," has been convinced of its own superiority, without even considering the plausibility of a serious philosophical reflection beyond the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and its colonies. Africa may have its psychology, India religion, China ethics, and so on, but philosophy is viewed exclusively as the brilliant invention of the Greek mind, brought about by the European genius and later grafted onto other parts of the world, especially North America. This naïve optimism is crumbling in our times.

Leaving aside other problems about the nature of philosophy, we are led, paradoxically, to a very positive conclusion about the function of comparative philosophy in the modern world.

Comparative philosophy would then be more than *compared* philosophy or *comparing* philosophy. It is a contrasting and *imparative* philosophy. Comparative philosophy makes us acutely aware that we cannot do philosophy in a vacuum or only "among ourselves." We cannot do philosophy without contrasting and learning. We have to contrast our previous notions and learn from the opinions of others. We need, further, to be ready to contest our own conclusions.

Every philosophy fulfills this triple function: it deepens our common (prephilosophical!) notions; it learns from the experiences of others; and it submits the results to radical critique. In this sense, every philosophy is comparative philosophy.

Reversing, again paradoxically, what was hinted at at the beginning, comparative philosophy boomerangs from its initial thrust. It unconsciously wanted to be the super-philosophy of the modern Western critical mind, passing judgment on everything under the sun, uncritical of its own assumptions and of what philosophy is. Today we are becoming more and more aware that the true philosophical spirit can no longer be sure that the search for certainty is

the real business of philosophy. We need to take a new step back and put on equal footing (*com-parare*) the different manifestations of human experience, beginning anew to philosophize the process of trying to understand, reflect upon, shape, transform, and know reality with the help of all the means available to us.

We do comparative philosophy not as an independent discipline, with adolescent urges for autonomy, but as a mature *ontonomic* activity of the human spirit, contrasting everything, learning from everywhere, and radically criticizing the enterprise itself.

## SECTION XVI

### IDENTITY AND NONCONTRADICTION

#### Two Schemes of Intelligibility\*

When, in 1954, I visited T. R. V. Murti for the first time, we had a real *en-counter*, in the double meaning of the word: a meeting of minds and a clash of opinions. I encountered both a traditional and a contemporary thinker. He was the main cause for my decision to remain in Varanasi for a quarter of a century, although with some interruptions. It is not now the moment to describe the friendship that developed through the years and the impact of his thought.<sup>1</sup> As a tribute to the master and an homage to the friend, I am honored to dedicate to him these reflections, which were already foreshadowed in many of our *brahmodyas*.

#### I

Comparative philosophy is ultimately not possible, because the standpoint that is needed in order to compare philosophies already implies another—and not neutral—philosophy.<sup>2</sup> This fact does not exclude, however, what I have called *imparative<sup>3</sup> philosophy*, that is, a philosophy that criticizes other philosophical systems and learns from them, but does not set itself as an absolute norm.<sup>4</sup> Nor does the impossibility of comparative philosophy exclude a *contrasting philosophy* as a philosophical endeavor trying to confront two or more ultimate visions of Reality. I would like to sketch here an example of the latter.

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\* "Identity and Noncontradiction: Two Schemes of Intelligibility," in *T. R. V. Murti and Indian Philosophical Tradition* (Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University, 1989), 207–15.

<sup>1</sup> Both my article "The Crisis of Mādhyamika and Indian Philosophy Today," *Philosophy East and West* 16 (1966): 117–31, and my chapter "Brief an einen Hindu-Intellektuellen" in *Offenbarung und Verkündigung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 69–83, were direct fruits of my interaction with Professor Murti's thought.

<sup>2</sup> See my essay "What Is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" in G. J. Larson and E. Deutsch, eds., *Interpreting across Boundaries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 116–36. See chapter 15.

<sup>3</sup> From the Italian word *imparare*, to learn.

<sup>4</sup> See my "Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of Religion," in *Man and World* (1980), 351–83. In Vol. II of this *Opera Omnia*.

I should begin with a historical disclaimer. We speak of East and West, India and Greece just for the sake of stressing polarities and almost as a heuristic device, but not as geographical or historical categories. Each human tradition is complex enough so as to have an East and a West. Each modern thinker today is sensible to cross-cultural influences, and the Indic as well as the Western civilization can show examples of what I call the predominantly Western and predominantly Indic attitudes.<sup>5</sup> We may as well speak of human paradigms. The fact remains, however, that some philosophical trends have become more prominent in, or have influenced, a particular culture more than others. With this proviso, I may just sketch my hypothesis.

## II

A significant part of Western culture is based on the primacy of the principle of noncontradiction, while a significant part of the spiritual history of India is motivated by an impassioned quest for the principle of identity.

The genius of the Abrahamic traditions lies in the acute awareness of particularities and differences. To know what a thing is, we contra-distinguish it from all the others, we isolate it, as it were, in its uniqueness. And by so doing we are supposed to understand its being, which is uniquely different from all the rest. Beings are impenetrable. It is impossible for a being to be and not to be at the same time and in the same respect. Each being is "condemned" to be itself by not being something else. The price of one's own identity, that is, to be *idem* (equal) to one-self is paid by not having the freedom to be (the) other.

Paradoxically enough, in these traditions identity means to be different, because identity is reached applying the principle of noncontradiction. Something contradictory cannot be said (it is *contra-dictory*); and, because it cannot be *said*, it is assumed that it *is not*. Furthermore it *is not* because it *cannot be*. The *logos* commands Being. A contra-diction is something that the *logos* refuses to say. And because we cannot *say* it (the contra-diction), we deduce it *is not*. Being excludes Non-Being because it would be a contra-diction, because we cannot say (*think*) it. There is a clear correspondence between Thinking and Being (although surreptitiously through Saying). This attitude implicitly equates Being with Consciousness.

*Logos* here is another word for consciousness. What we cannot *think*, *is not*. Time is here not considered. What we could not know today we may tomorrow. What is unthinkable today may be thinkable tomorrow. The *cannot* of the principle of noncontradiction requires contemporaneity. This is why it is formulated saying that A cannot *be* Non-A at the same time (and in the same respect, of course). It cannot *be* it because we cannot meaningfully *say* it. It is contra-dictory. *Contra-diction* is not: *logos* cannot contradict itself. And the destiny of Being is linked to that of *logos*. Onto-logy is this indissoluble marriage between Being and

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<sup>5</sup> See my *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le christianisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 37–41. In Vol. VII of this *Opera Omnia*. See the astounding elucidations of Paul Florensky on the self-contradictory nature of truth: "La vérité est telle justement parce qu'elle ne craint aucune contestation. Elle ne le craint pas parce qu'elle même en dit plus long contre elle-même que ne pourrait le faire n'importe quelle négation. Seulement elle accompagne son auto-négation d'une affirmation. Pour l'entendement, la vérité est une contradiction; laquelle apparaît dès que la vérité se trouve formulae. . . . La vérité est une antinomie; elle ne peut pas ne pas l'être" [The truth is such precisely because it does not fear any challenge. She doesn't fear him because she even says more about herself than any denial could. Only it accompanies its self-negation with an affirmation. For the understanding, the truth is a contradiction; which appears as soon as the truth is formulated. . . . The truth is an antinomy; it cannot not be] (in *La colonne et le fondement de la vérité* [from Russian] [Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1975], 100).

Thinking. It was already confirmed by the second event of the foundational act of Semitic history—Genesis 15:1 being the first (see also verse 6) and Genesis 22:1ff. the second. What Abraham *thought* impossible (God's command to sacrifice his son), and which he was ready to let it happen, proved that it was not to *be*. He did not sacrifice Isaac. Here Being obeyed Thought after the act of "faith" of the will to obey Being.

In this first scheme of intelligibility, the principle of identity is certainly not ignored, but it does not enjoy a primacy. "A is" precisely because it is not Non-A. If A were also Non-A, it (A) could not be A. The identification between Thinking and Being is even semiotically clear. We call contra-dictory not only what cannot be *said*, but what cannot be *thought*, and, from here, we "deduce" that it cannot *be*. Ontology creeps in: the contradictory fact cannot *be* because it cannot be true. The realm of Truth is equated with the reign of Being.

### III

The genius of the Indic spirit, on the other hand, lies in the acute awareness of identity. A is A. But what is this A that is identical to A? Where do we find a predicate that can fully be identified with its subject? There is not a single predicate that can fully be identified with its subject, unless it ceases to be predicate. The most perfect "A is P" will still not be "A is A," if P has to be P, that is, if P is P. But then the first P has become a subject and it is no longer the predicate. We have thus to revert to the subject. What does a subject identical to itself mean? The only subject through which we may experience this identity is our own "I."

But what am I? My being is not able to be exhaustively defined by my body any more than by my mind, nor by any other predicate or attribute. It is impossible to find any predicate that can fully be identified with (me) the I. The "I" that can be fully "I-self" (it-self) has to break all limitations. The limits of a thing are the necessary limitations to distinguish a thing. The definition reaches the Non-A of the A in order to "isolate" the A by the principle of noncontradiction.

The "I" that is identical with itself is no longer a finite and limited "I." It is I-self; it is absolute I. It is only in the identification of *aham-brahman* that there is a perfect identity, but in that case *aham* is no longer (my) *ego*; it is *brahman*. True identity does not pertain to the finite world.

Noncontradictory thinking, at this point, is superseded. Noncontradiction operates in the sphere of the "either-or," while identity thinking deals with "this as well as that." When A is A, we cannot even say that A is A. There is no such (predicate) A, because predication is not the right method to look for identity. The *identity* we search, expressed by the Latin word *idem*, the Sanskrit *idam*, and related to the Indo-European affirmative particle *it*, is the self-same sameness of each thing "seen" from within itself. In this sense, A is-not. We can simply say, "A-am," without any predication, since no predicative thought is here allowed. The A, which we say is (equal to) A, "is" no longer A.<sup>6</sup>

We should say nothing. The formula would be not "I am what I am," which amounts to saying, "I am I," in the sense of "I know that I am I," but it would be, "I am," which does not even include that "I know that I am." Simply, "I am."

But to artificially close the door to thought is irrational; to suppress reflection is sheer repression, and ultimately impossible. The words (thoughts) have to recoil by themselves

<sup>6</sup> See my paper "The Threefold Linguistic Intra-Subjectivity" in M. M. Olivetti (ed.), *Intersoggettività, socialità, religione*, Archivio di Filosofia 54, no. 1-3 (Roma: CEDAM, 1986), 593-606.

along with the mind, as one Upaniṣadic text affirms.<sup>7</sup> If the West asks, "What is this?" and Science elaborates the answers, India asks, "What am I?", and Experience puts us on the track.

#### IV

When the primacy is held by the principle of noncontradiction, the thought is always the chief performer in the discovery of Reality. Thinking tells us what is and what is not. More than this, thought enables us to discern *different degrees of reality* inasmuch as we can think of something as more or less consistent and permanent. Thinking cannot cross the portals of the Infinite, but it can reach the threshold and, starting from there, discover the diverse degrees of reality on a descending scale right to the lowest rung.

In other words, inasmuch as Thinking tells us what things are or not, Truth becomes the most important category; it is all-important. Truth, so conceived, is necessarily one. It cannot be otherwise, since it would be contradictory to affirm that it is more than one. But if Truth is one, thinking discovers nevertheless several degrees of Being, precisely because thinking is the power of discriminating the different levels of reality. Truth is one only because, in the last analysis, it is the result of a judgment determined by the principle of noncontradiction. Accordingly, "beings" are numerous because each possesses its own particular existence, which impinges on our thought in its own way; each *is* insofar as it *is not* the other.

If there is a Supreme Being, this Being will have to be wholly "other," absolutely transcendent, totally different. Many traditions have called it "God." The notion of God is the result of the application of the primacy of the principle of noncontradiction.

On the other hand, when the principle of identity has the primacy, degrees of Reality are at once inadmissible. If such degrees were to exist, even if they were only two, they could not both really be, for the two ways of being real would—by definition—be indistinguishable by virtue of the principle of identity. Being can only be one because Reality is only one. Variety belongs to the realm of thought, and thought is the agent of truth. Consequently, there will exist *several degrees of truth* according to the depth of our speculative capabilities. The sense-world and the intellectual-world, matter and spirit, are the same Reality (inasmuch as they are real), but they do not enjoy the same degree of truth. Since thinking is here secondary, Indic culture will not fall into the modern Western temptation of substituting living with thinking.

If there is a "Supreme Being," this Being will have to be wholly indistinguishable, absolutely immanent, totally identical. Many traditions call it *brahman*. The notion of *brahman* is the result of the application of the principle of identity.

#### V

This gives an example of how differently the Semitic and the Indic minds work when trying to describe the Ultimate. I have called God and *brahman* "homeomorphic equivalents" because, although they do not perform the same function, they have an equivalent function in the respective systems of thought.<sup>8</sup>

Is there any way of bridging this gulf between these two ways of approaching Reality? If by "bridging" we understand a reduction to a more comprehensive system, I have my doubts that such an *Aufhebung* may ever be attained. It is not intrinsically impossible, but the human

<sup>7</sup> TU II.4.1 and 9.1.

<sup>8</sup> See my *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Co., 1984), 31 and 71. Now in Vol. VI, Part 2, of this *Opera Omnia*.

experience of several millennia calls for a great prudence in accepting this easy optimism. The world faces systems that are mutually irreconcilable. Pluralism is the keyword here.

If by "bridging" we understand the possibility of transiting from one scheme of intelligibility to another, we should again make a distinction and a commentary.

The distinction is this. If we mean the theoretical understanding of two methods of approaching intelligibility, this very essay is an attempt to show that it is possible. If, on the other hand, we mean an existential reenactment and an inner conviction of the two worldviews, this may be exceptionally possible for those who have undergone the two experiences and feel at home with the two traditions not just by mere learning. But the gap cannot be bridged intellectually in a super-system. Either *brahman* or God, in our example.

The commentary will add that this bridging is only possible if we somehow accept by inner conviction, as a fruit of our own personal experience, that, besides the realm of the sensible and the reign of the intelligible, there is a third dimension, present in both of them but irreducible to them, which has sometimes been called the Mystical. Others may call it awakening, realization, or spiritual experience. At any rate, this third dimension is only manifested in and through the other two dimensions.

No amount of mysticism can dispense with the exigencies of thinking. And no amount of thinking can overrule the witnessing of perception. Man, like the entire reality, is a *trika* of Siva, *sakti*, and *nara*: the Divine, the Human, and the Cosmic.



## SECTION XVII

### THINKING AND BEING\*

Since the beginning of Western philosophy, the tension between Thinking and Being has been considered as an ultimate polarity and the ground of all philosophical reflection. They may be equal or different and understood in several ways, but, in the last analysis, the ultimate polarity is that of Being and Thinking. If the object of Thinking is Being, the subject of Being is Thinking—the thinker. It is Thinking that discovers to us what Being is. Thinking has become so powerful because it has made the astounding discovery that Being follows (the laws of) a certain type of Thinking. Modern Science is based on the belief that Being or Reality will honor what we correctly think, or rather calculate. The bridge projected by the engineer will stand, the chemical compound will appear, the machine will run, the virus will be destroyed. And even Chance will be controlled through the most rational calculus of probabilities.

This type of Thinking has tamed Being. Intelligibility is paramount. Rationality cannot be defeated because, of course, the arena in which the tournament takes place is precisely the rational arena. The universe in which we live still has loopholes, unknown factors, enigmas, and the Unknown surrounds us, but humans would cease to be humans—so we think—if they were to give up the principle of rationality. Onto-logic is the main category. The Sacred Future will take care of all our unsolved riddles. The bulk of the Western civilization and few others, such as the *vedānta*, have been built on this paradigm. There is certainly place for the irrational, the a-rational, and even for the suprarational, but *ratio* is the central paradigm. Man is a rational animal (however inaccurate the translation of the famous Aristotelian definition may be).<sup>1</sup> "All Men desire to know," begins Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.<sup>2</sup> The ideal is to

\* "Thinking and Being," in *Du Vrai, du Beau, du Bien. Études Philosophiques présentées au Professeur Evangelos A. Moutsopoulos* (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 39–42. E. Moutsopoulos has cultivated the *prima philosophia*, which is not always the case among philosophers today. I offer the following overcondensed reflections as a tribute to this friend.

<sup>1</sup> *Politics* I.2, 1253a9. See my exegesis in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), and J. D. García Bacca's chapter "Hombre en funciones de 'altavoz' del universo y de si mismo," in his book *Tres ejercicios literario-filosóficos de antropología* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1984), 11–67.

<sup>2</sup> I.1, 980a21.

convert everything into the known, to know everything. If not now, later. If not we, at least a Supreme omniscient Being will.

The most original Indic paradigm, in spite of many *vedāntic* resemblances with what has just been said, is different. *Vedic* wisdom is not just *vedānta* (nor is Madhva the same as Śaṅkara, for that matter). *Pūrvamimāṃsā* is not *tantra*. The central place of Indic wisdom, I submit, is not occupied by *jñāna*, gnosis, knowledge, but by *mokṣa*, salvation, liberation. Even for the *vedānta*, *jñāna* is for the sake of *mukti*—although ultimately the two are identified. And this liberation (as the Buddhist reform points out: *nirvāṇa*) is also liberation from Being, that is, letting Being be what it is, and not what any kind of thinking or insight dictates Being to be. Freedom is here the main category. It is Being that speaks, whether we can follow it with our thinking or not. Being here does not “want” or need to be thought out: it “wants” to be spoken out (to put it in a short formulation that would need qualifications).

In other words, Thinking does not lie at the same level of Being. The Word is closer to it. In the Beginning was the Word (*vāc*), not the Thought (*cit*).<sup>3</sup> Being speaks, and what it utters may not be understood by any mind. Reality does not need to be intelligible.

Being is absolutely not bound to comply with the laws of Thinking. We cannot transgress these laws with impunity, certainly, but Reality, Being, has no laws. The fundamental scheme is here a different one. It may be expressed in an intelligible way, of course, but this intelligibility works just for us and remains in the outskirts of Being, so to speak. It does not penetrate the ultimate Reality. *Brahman* is not self-intelligible: *Īśvara* is the consciousness of *brahman*. We have here a different fundamental human attitude. This hypothesis asserts that the Indic paradigm puts the Word as the first expression, manifestation, revelation, speaking, . . . of Being: Thinking is related to the Word, to what can be spoken of—even as ineffable—and not directly to Being. We think the Speakable, so that the dyad Thinking/Being is replaced by the triad Being/Speaking/Thinking. Graphically, we could put it as follows:

Being ↔ Thinking  
as the Greek model, and

Being → Speaking ↔ Thinking

as the Indic paradigm. In this latter case, Being speaks as a kind of self-expansion that in no way can be controlled or determined by any other “factor” (such as thinking, for instance). There is no going back, as it were. Being is thinkable only inasmuch as it speaks itself out, as it is speakable. Thinking scrutinizes what Being is by the mediation of the Word, or rather the Word is the Mediator—the *vakhabhi*, *madhyama*, and *pāyanti* (*pratibhā*) in the Indic Philosophy of Language.<sup>4</sup> Thinking is linked to Being by means of language but Being does not need to be limited to the thinkable. It is free. We could adduce here the fundamental philosophical idea of Buddhism, namely that freezing the fundamental flow of Reality, that is, attachment to a static and substantial “is” (beings and Being) is the cause of all suffering. In other words, forcing Being to adapt to Thinking, because of the false assumption of the correspondence between the two, is precisely the very essence of *avidyā*.

<sup>3</sup> See *RV* I.164.37; *TB* II.8.4–5; *TMB* XX.14.2, etc., translated and commented upon in my book *The Vedic Experience* (London: DLT, 1977), 88ff. These texts belong to a tradition previous to the *Vedāntic* interpretation of *sat-cit-ānanda* as the Ultimate Reality.

<sup>4</sup> See, for a good summary, Gaurinath Sastri, *The Philosophy of Word and Meaning* (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1959).

Being is absolutely free. Echoing the *Māndūkya-upaniṣad* 11, and Śaṅkara's commentary (whether belonging to him or not), and following Gaupapāda's *Kārikā*, we could formulate the same intuition, although without necessarily agreeing with the prevalent idealistic interpretation of it. We could then say that *prajñā*, consciousness, is the measure (*mitt*) of all things. It measures (*minoti*) Being. But beyond consciousness as the third stage, after the waking and the sleeping stages, there "is" *turiya*, the fourth, which is neither consciousness nor unconsciousness (*aprajñā*), which is nonthinkable (*acintya*), nongraspable, and so on. And this is the *ātman*, incommensurable with anything, as the same *Upaniṣad* 7 affirms.

The flow of Being, that is, the being of Being goes from Being to what Being manifests of itself in language and thought. Now, thinking demands to be true, that is, to "reflect"—what Being is. Thus, it needs its own verification. It needs a way back to Being. In the Greek paradigm, the *logos* performs this double function, that of word and that of reason. It is a reasonable word and not just a cry. The *logos*—qua reason—needs to go back to Being, and, by doing so, it "makes" Being intelligible. In the Indic paradigm, the Word stands as a buffer, as it were, between Being and thinking. Thinking proceeds to verification by going back to speech, but leaves Being free, untouched. This is what lies behind the almost universal conviction that no formula and no thought can encompass the fullness of life of an authentic human experience. We cannot put all our life into thoughts or express it adequately in formulae. Being is greater than—that is, irreducible to—that word and thought.

Can we bridge these two radically different basic attitudes? Can we still call "philosophy" the Indic approach? Undoubtedly, there are in India "philosophies" of the Western kind. But a comparison between the ultimate attitudes brings us to radical questions that cannot be dismissed once they have been put.<sup>5</sup>

It could be the task of comparative philosophy to address itself to this problem. We should then compare two fundamental human options. The one stands for the primacy of intelligibility, and, ultimately, it reduces Being (or Reality) to Consciousness. The other stands for the primacy of freedom, and thus it renounces any ultimate control over Being. But we do not possess any basis of comparison (criterion) outside the parameters offered by the two contending options. Strictly speaking, we do not compare, but contrast, that is, set the one against the other (Latin *contra-stare*). Should we then speak of Contrasting Philosophy?

We cannot follow the two options at the same time: if we subscribe to one, we will have to reject the other. We cannot even prove any of them. They are ultimate, and thus do not leave room for any further basis on which the proof could stand. We do not fully understand either of them. Both admit that there are incomprehensible things. The one hopes that Being may become (or is in itself) intelligible. The other believes Being does not need to be, in itself, transparent to any understanding.

Now, applying the one or the other scheme, we can contrast philosophies and even study philosophical problems on a certain comparative basis. On the other hand, for a more positivistically oriented linguistic analysis, the very language we use in presenting the issue is considered nonlegitimate. We can thus only claim that the above-mentioned discussion belongs to the realm of a particular philosophy that not so much compares philosophies as it elaborates a philosophical language that allows us to take a *Schritt zurück*<sup>6</sup> for a fruitful philosophical investigation. We may gain a new "stand" by contrasting.

<sup>5</sup> See my *La experiencia filosófica de la India* (Madrid: Trotta, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> A step back.

This is what makes pluralism a real challenge to comparative philosophy. The very claim to reduce everything, every philosophy, to a single pattern of intelligibility is suspect.<sup>7</sup> This is also a challenge to the neocolonialist trends of our times, carried out in the name of Science, Technology, or Economics.

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<sup>7</sup> See my "The Myth of Pluralism," *Cross Currents* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 197–230. Now in Vol. VI, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

## SECTION XVIII

### THE EXPERIENTIAL "ARGUMENT" OF ABHINAVAGUPTA

#### A Cross-Cultural Consideration\*

*sarvam̄ sarvatmakam̄*  
*All is related to all*

\* \* \*

### 1

#### THE PROBLEM: THE HOW

##### Introduction

The great Kashmiri sage Abhinavagupta (ca. 975–1025) has an astonishingly similar expression to that of the great Scholastic, St. Anselm of Canterbury (ca. 1033–1109): “that than which nothing greater can be conceived.” In spite of the fact that Anselm’s sentence is to be found in Latin writers before Christ, and has had a long history, any mutual influence is extremely improbable. If we want to bring their thoughts together, we need what I have called a *diatopic hermeneutics*.<sup>1</sup> We cannot even be sure that the two

\* “The Experiential ‘Argument’ of Abhinavagupta. A Cross-Cultural Consideration,” in M. M. Olivetti (ed.), *L’argomento ontologico* (Padova: CEDAM, 1990), 489–520.

<sup>1</sup> See my *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (Bangalore: ATC, 1983), 8–10, and elsewhere. In Vol. IX, Part 1 and 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

sentences have the same referent, unless we have found the *homeomorphic equivalence* between the two.<sup>2</sup>

Two identical sentences outside their respective contexts do not necessarily need to have the same meaning. No *text* is meaningful outside a *context*. Even when we extricate a text from its own context, we place it automatically within another one, namely our more or less personal context, which gives a specific meaning to the text we try to understand. The six days of the biblical creation story of the world, to give a simple example, mean neither six, nor days, nor world, in the *kosmology*<sup>3</sup> of a post-Ptolemaic universe. "The sun has set"—says Madhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*—has a different meaning for the adulterer, the thief, or the philosopher.<sup>4</sup> In short, it is a mistake to assume a priori that there is a universal *texture* embracing all actual or possible contexts.<sup>5</sup>

Contextual studies are not impossible, but they demand another method. Cross-cultural studies are not a barren field. They require a double entry, as it were. Or, as Abhinavagupta puts it, "There is no expectancy of more than two in comparison. There is comparison of only one simultaneously with reference to the other."<sup>6</sup> This is a timely warning against the globalizing tendency of the technocratic mentality, which uses one single criterion of comparison to compare all things, thus continuing centuries-old colonial tendencies, now under the name of global projects. All too often we hear talks of world democracy, world market, world government, world bank, and the like. To be sure, each culture should be open to its neighboring cultures, but this does not mean a hodgepodge of cultures. To understand a text, we always need a definite context, even if we may transcend the particular context of a single culture. This proviso was needed before approaching our commentary on one short line of the *Parā-trāśikā-vivaraṇa*, written by Abhinavaguptācārya commenting on a sacred text of the *kaula* Kashmir śivaistic tradition.

I divide this exposition into three parts. They are called the *How*, the *What*, and the *Why*.

These three interrogations are needed in order to understand a text. The three are intertwined, and yet they should be carefully distinguished. Neglecting any of them would lead to misunderstandings. We cannot truly know *what* a text says if we do not understand, at the same time, *how* it is that it says in the way it does, and *why* it is said that way.

As for the *how*, we need to know the context, the field of references, connotation, prehistory, and posterior reception of the text. We have to enter into the *mythos* from which the *logos* of our text has emanated. *How* a thought is expressed or an intuition is formulated conditions and shapes *what* is said. This *quomodo*, prior to the *quidditas*, is not necessarily reflected upon by the author of the text. It is the context that offers the tools for the understanding of the text. The *quidditas* of a text depends on the context.

As for the *what*, we need to know the text in itself, we need to penetrate into the thought of the author, the meaning of the words, and the internal universe of discourse (*Gedankenwelt*) disclosed in the text. Each text is a world of its own.

<sup>2</sup> See my *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Bangalore: ATC, 1978), 31, 71, and elsewhere. In Vol. VI, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>3</sup> By "kosmology" I do not mean a more or less rational vision of the world (*cosmology*), but the *mythos* in which and/or as which the *kosmos* appears to a particular culture.

<sup>4</sup> The adulterer sees it as the propitious time, the thief as the occasion, the philosopher contemplates *sandhya*, the evocative power of the twilight.

<sup>5</sup> See my "The Texture of a Text," *Point of Contact* 2, no. 1 (1978): 51–64 (New York).

<sup>6</sup> Abhinavagupta, *Parā-trāśikā-vivaraṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism*, English trans. Jaideva Singh (Delhi, 1988), 26; hereafter quoted as "Singh." The same text, under the title *A Trident of Wisdom*, has been published by SUNY Press (Albany, NY, 1989).

For the third question, the *why*, we need an external point of reference, we need comparison, we need to discover the reason why that text says what it says, and why it says this, having situated it in a more general *texture*. To evaluate, and even to understand, we need to establish relationships. Strictly cross-cultural comparisons are not necessary, but we have to bring the text against an unbiased or independent field. This paper is then an exercise in diatopic hermeneutics and cross-cultural studies.

### The Context

The context of our text is made mainly out of three unequal and not concentric circles. First, the particular tradition of *kaula Śivaism* that flourished in Kashmir since the eighth century C.E. The *kaula* school of Śivaism is one of the many lineages that flourished in Kashmir following an a-dualist approach to reality between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries. It is characterized by a specific blend of religious practice and philosophical speculation.

Some of the most salient aspects of this tradition could be summed up in three words: *trikam*, *parā vāk*, and *advaita*.

The first, *trikam*, stands for the Trinitarian character of Reality: *sarvam̄ trika-rūpam eva*, "everything has a triadic form" says one text.<sup>7</sup> *Nara-śakti-śiva-ātmakam̄ trikan̄y*, says one of the introductory verses to our text.<sup>8</sup> It is the triad of the Divine (*śiva*), the Power (*śakti*), and the Empirical (*nara*; the beings). The second, *parā vāk* (supreme word), reveals the insight that the divine consciousness is expressed in the Word, and thus that language symbolizes the very nature of Reality.<sup>9</sup> The third word, *advaita*, although not exclusive to this school, expresses the distinction from both dualism and monism. Reality is neither split in two nor shrunken into one.

It is significant to remark that this, one of the most profound human wisdoms, is not classified as one of the six classical *darśanas* or systems of philosophy, precisely because the modern dichotomy between philosophy (or theology) and praxis is not to be found—or justified—there. Such a dichotomy is probably due to the *tantra* element of Kashmiri Śivaism. Here, however, intellectual speculation without praxis is considered not only superfluous but misleading, and ultimately wrong.<sup>10</sup> It is also significant that these types of philosophies that do not follow modern dichotomies are beginning to be studied more and more.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Bäumer in Singh, xvi.

<sup>8</sup> Singh, 3.

<sup>9</sup> "In the *kaula* tradition there is a basic tendency to be suspicious of language," writes Paul Eduardo Muller-Ortega in *The Triadic Heart of Śiva. Kaula Tantricism of Abhinavagupta in the Non-Dual Shaivism of Kashmir* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1979), 15. I often refer to this excellent monograph, which translates a parallel text, the *Paratrīśika-lagbu-vṛttib*. But this suspicion (if any) arises precisely because of the importance given to language. "Language and the rules of grammar reflect consciousness," says B. Bäumer rightly (Singh, xvii), quoting Abhinavagupta's "There is no speech which does not reach the heart directly." "Il linguaggio è lo stesso io, la nostra stessa soggettività" [Language is the very self, our very subjectivity], writes Raniero Gnoli in the introduction to his monumental translation of the *Tantraloka. Luce delle sacre scritture di Abhinavagupta* (Torino: UTET, 1972), 31 (hereafter quoted as "Gnoli"). He also translated a few pages of the *Pari-trīśikā-vivarana* as appendices to this work, 839–67, and has more recently translated the entire text (Roma: ISMEO, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> This would be my general commentary to the contemporary discussion on aesthetic or poetic truth. See Pheroze S. Wadia, "The Aesthetic Non-Naturalism of Abhinavagupta: A Non-Aristotelian Interpretation," *Philosophy East and West* 31, no. 1 (January 1981): 71–77, and the bibliographical references given there.

<sup>11</sup> See the pertinent comments by Gerald J. Larson, "The Aesthetic (*rasavada*) and the Religious

The second, wider circle is the tradition called Śivaism, which is probably a particular blend of Aryan and Dravidian views of Reality. The origins of Śivaism are a subject of erudite discussions.<sup>12</sup> Some trace back its origins to the pre-Indic civilization of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro in the third millennium BCE. Others find traces of it in the *Vedas* (in spite of *RV* VII.21.5 and X.99.3 against *linga* worship) and assimilate Śiva to the *vedic* Rudra, and so on. At any rate, Śiva is the supreme Godhead, soon interpreted as the Absolute Reality. Śivaism became a fertile bunch of religions and developed differently in the Paśupata of Gujarat, the Śaiva-Siddhanta of Tamilnadu, the Viraśaivism of Kamataka, and many others.

Some common traits could perhaps be reduced to: (a) the worship of Śiva as both a very personal Deity and as an all-pervading Absolute; (b) the preeminence of praxis, worship, cult, *tantra* over theory, speculation, doctrines; and (c) the attempt at integrating all spheres of Reality open to human experience, without neglecting any of them.

The third, still wider circle is what we could call the Indic tradition, which encompasses the Sanskrit world and other linguistic spheres, like Pali, *prakṛts*, plus Tibetan and Buddhist Chinese. So-called Hinduism, as well as Jainism and Buddhism along with the autochthonous religions of the Indic subcontinent, belong to this rich and variegated *phylum* of human traditions. They have, as a common trait, a particular form of thinking that is undoubtedly different from what we may call the Semitic form of thought. The notion of *karman* (cosmic solidarity in space and time) could be an example. The primacy of the principle of identity over the principle of noncontradiction could be another one.<sup>13</sup>

Without at least a cursory knowledge of this triple circle, I insist, any comparison is methodologically flawed. Yet, in the impossibility, now, of presenting even a shadow of these circles, I may try to shortcut this exposition by offering a succinct gloss of the *Paratrīśika* 1, which is the basic text on which Abhinavagupta writes his *vivaraṇa*.

This may serve as a very first introduction to the context of the text. We keep our question in mind: *how* is the text going to say what we are going to read?

According to this first *sloka*:

Sri Devi uvāca  
anuttaran̄ kathān̄ deva  
sadyāḥ kaulika-siddhidam  
yena vijñāta-mātrenā  
khecari-samatān̄ vrajet . . .

The first *pada* is relatively clear: "How does the *anuttara* bring about, spontaneously, the *kaulika* perfection?"

*Kaula* is a technical word of this school. *Kula*, generally translated as family (from the root *kul*, grouping together, which is probably of non-Aryan origin), means herd, group,

(*brahmaśvada*) in Abhinavagupta's Kashmir Saivism," *Philosophy East and West*, 26, no. 4 (October 1976): 371-87.

<sup>12</sup> See K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "A Historical Sketch of Śaivism," in Haridas Bhattacharyya (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture), 4:63-78; and the "Overview" by D. N. Lorenzen in M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 13:7-11.

<sup>13</sup> See my "Identity and Noncontradiction: Two Schemes of Intelligibility," in *Festschrift für T.R.K.*

assemblage, multitude, race, family (Monier-Williams) or *Geschlecht, Sippe, Menge, Herder* (Mayrhofer), and refers to the totality of things, the universe, including the body.

It has been felicitously rendered by "embodied cosmos."<sup>14</sup> Muller-Ortega adds,

The notion of *kauliki siddhi* can be interpreted in several ways. On one level, the *siddhi* or accomplishment of the *kula* is simply the full-blown manifestation composed of the fifty principles. This is the expansion of Śiva's nature, his play, which involves the concealment of Śiva from himself. On another level, *kauliki siddhi* can refer to the extraordinary capacities (*vibhuti*) that can be made to operate within the *kula*, that is, within the achieved experience of the body/cosmos. Finally, *kauliki siddhi* represents the highest condition of the liberated being, the *jivanmukta*, who has successfully embodied in his own awareness the totality of the Heart, of the *kula*, the manifested cosmos, the power of Śiva, as well as the very unboundedness of Śiva, the primordial consciousness itself.<sup>15</sup>

I would suggest that the *kaulika* perfection amounts to the perfection of the universe, of the *saculum*. It is a homeomorphic equivalent to the notion of *ekklēsia* according to the Christian Greek Fathers, who saw the *ecclesia* as the first-born (*πρωτότοκος*)<sup>16</sup> of God, existing from the very beginning (*εξ αρχῆς*),<sup>17</sup> since the foundation of the cosmos (*πρὸ καταβολῆς κοσμοῦ*),<sup>18</sup> and so on. It is high time we cease to have only "microdoxic" interpretations of the "Church."

In both cases, we have a space that corresponds to the Divine *ad extra*, and allows the unfolding of God's creativity without diminishing the absolute character of the Divine.

The second *pada* allows a double interpretation. The entire text is translated thus:

The exalted goddess said (to Bhairava): "O God, how does the unsurpassable divine Consciousness bring about immediately the achievement of the identity of the empirical I with the perfect I-consciousness of Śiva which come about in this very physical body and by the mere knowledge of which one acquires sameness with the Universal Consciousness-power (*khecari*)?"<sup>19</sup>

It is an example of translation/interpretation leaning, of course, on Abhinavagupta's commentary.

After the first *pada*: "O Lord, how can the Ultimate of its own accord grant the *kaulika* perfection?" Muller-Ortega gives a double interpretation:<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Muller-Ortega, op. cit., 100–109.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 108–9.

<sup>16</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Protepticus* 9.

<sup>17</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* I.19.

<sup>18</sup> Valentinian, quoted by Clement, *Excerpta Theodoti*, 40 (PG 9.677C). See more references in G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), and a historico-theological elaboration in Hugo Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche* (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1964); H. De Lubac, *Méditation sur l'Eglise* (Paris: Aubier, 1954), etc.

<sup>19</sup> Singh, 5–6.

<sup>20</sup> Miller-Ortega, op. cit., 205.

1) by what means, as soon as known, does the *khecarī*, Moving-in-the-Void, attain a condition of equality?

2) by means of which, as soon as it is known, he would obtain the condition of equalization with the *khecarī*?<sup>21</sup>

*Khecarī* is another technical word: *khe carati iti khecarī*, "that which moves about in *kha* is *khecarī*." *Kha* has been translated as sky or empty space, *akaśa*. "Thus the entire universe—says Abhinavagupta in his probably major work—is a reflection in the pure sky of consciousness (of Bhairava)."<sup>22</sup>

*Kha* is a hole, a cavity. There are nine such cavities in the human body. But the great emptiness is to be found in *vyoman* (sky) and *akaśa* (ether, space). *Khecarī* is the free moving in emptiness when our consciousness has overcome the knowledge of objects.

*Khecarī* may be homeomorphic to the *vijñana-anantya-ayatana* or "the place of consciousness without limits" of the Buddhist tradition, which also uses the symbol of the *vyoman* (sky) and *akaśa* (space) for emptiness.<sup>23</sup> Abhinavagupta himself in his *Laghuvṛtti* speaks of *akaśa-sakti* or "the power of space":

The power of space plays no role in sustaining the finite subject. For the power of space is inherent in the individual soul as the true subjectivity, at once empty of objects and providing a place in which objects may be known.<sup>24</sup>

We here touch an important notion. When Abhinavagupta affirms that consciousness is the essence of all, it should not be understood in a *vedantic* sense that all is consciousness in an unqualified way. In his own language, he says,

The nature of such a consciousness is its capacity for self-referral, and because of that, there always arises a spontaneous sound (*dhvani*) which is termed the supreme, the great Heart. That self-consciousness in the Heart in which the entire universe without remainder is dissolved, present at the beginning and at the end of perception of objects, is called in the authoritative texts the vibration (*spanda*) and, more precisely, the universal vibration (*samanya-spanda*), and its nature is an overflowing in the Self. For that vibration, which is a slight motion of a special kind, a unique vibrating light, is the wave of the ocean of consciousness, without which there is no consciousness at all. For the character of the ocean is that it is sometimes filled with waves and sometimes waveless. This consciousness is the essence of all. *The insentient*

<sup>21</sup> We are not entering here into the question whether we have to do with a *tatpuruṣa* compound (*khecarī-samatām*), second reading favored by Raffaele Torella, or as whether *khecarī* is the subject of *vajrēt* (first reading). See *ibid.*, 143.

<sup>22</sup> *Tantriloka* III.65 in *ibid.*, 89. Gnoli translates, "Il tutto si riflette così nel cielo puro della coscienza bhairavica η. nel Signore, da sé, senza intervento di alcun agente estraneo" [so the whole reflects itself in the pure heaven of bhairavic conscience . . . in the Lord, by itself, without any intervention of an external agent], 126.

<sup>23</sup> See Takeuchi Yoshinori, *The Hearth of Buddhism* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 80, etc. He describes this notion as a contemplative state in which knowledge becomes unbounded and limitless. He also correlates this idea with Heidegger's notion of "open sky" (76).

<sup>24</sup> Muller-Ortega, op. cit., 130–31.

*universe has consciousness as its essence, because its very foundation (*pratiṣṭha*) is dependent on that, and its essence is the great Heart!*<sup>25</sup>

We may render the meaning of it as follows: consciousness is never "pure" consciousness, to the extent that pure consciousness would not even be conscious of itself. Consciousness is always self-reflecting self-consciousness in the two senses of the word (subjective and objective genitive): Self-consciousness and Consciousness of it-Self. This is the *spanda*, the vibration constantly accompanying consciousness (the *parispanda*, the supreme vibration, not just the *prapanca-spanda* or vibration of manifestation).<sup>26</sup> Consciousness is such precisely because it is the Heart, physical as well as spiritual. This is the *prakāśa-vimarśa* or self-reflecting illumination of consciousness. Śiva is Light (as Abhinavagupta insistently repeats), but the light is light because it illumines. And the illuminated, the phenomenal world, is real, although it has no reality of its own. It is real precisely because it is illuminated.

Muller-Ortega quotes Abhinavagupta describing *vimarśa*:

The self-referential capacity of consciousness is united with all things. From within its very self, this capacity of consciousness differentiates the other, and from the other it actualizes itself again. It then unifies both of them, the self and the other, and having unified them, it submerges them both back into itself.<sup>27</sup>

We may quote still another text:

The light is one, and it cannot ever be divided, and for this reason there is no possible division capable of sundering the non-duality, the Lord, beautiful with light and bliss. But (someone might object) space, time, forms, knowledge, qualities, attributes, distance, and so on, are usually considered to be diversifying elements. Not so (we reply), because that which so appears is nothing but the light. If the light were not such, then non-duality would be useless. "Difference" then is only a word devoid of reality. But even if we admit a portion of reality to differences, then according to what we have said, it will have its basis only in non-duality. This is a pot, this is a cloth; the two are different, one from the other. The two are different from other cognizing subjects, the two are different even from me. All these notions are nothing but one light, which by its own intrinsic nature displays itself in this way.<sup>28</sup>

We may now return to the question of the Goddess. The *devī*, the *śakti*, the Thou of Śiva is praying to the *deva*, Śiva, the absolute I, and is asking about the *anuttaram*, the Unsurpassable, the Non-Higher, the *maius quo nihil*. This *anuttaram* is here qualified as related to the *kaulika siddhi* or fulfillment of the physical and psychical world. It is further asked by what criterion we know we have acquired sameness or harmony with the entire Reality.

This is *anuttaram*, which we analyze later. In the very beginning of another commentary, *Laghuvṛtti* 1, Abhinavagupta says: *tasya tu cidadmanah svaprakasasya na grahakantaram asti-iti*

<sup>25</sup> See *Tantrāloka* IV.181–86 in Muller-Ortega, op. cit., 118–19; see Gnoli, 175–76.

<sup>26</sup> See the excellent monograph on *spanda* by Mark S. G. Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> Īvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśini, I.205, as translated by Muller-Ortega.

<sup>28</sup> Mālinī-vijaya-vārtika, in Muller-Ortega, op. cit., 97.

*anuttaratvam*, "of whose nature is consciousness, self-refulgent, not graspable by other one, this (is) unsurpassableness."<sup>29</sup>

Our point is not to analyze the meaning of the text, but to focus on its context. The context is an invocation to the Supreme calling it *anuttaram*. *Anuttaram* means the character of unsurpassability, the impossibility of transcending "it," that which cannot be transcended.<sup>30</sup>

We may have enough material for our purpose, without entering more fully into the kosmology of Abhinavagupta.

### An Exegetical Nonary

The kosmology underlying the precedent reflections is diametrically opposed to the Christian Scholastic world of St. Anselm of Canterbury, and even more distant from the prevalent scientific cosmology of our times.

Keeping these three worlds in mind, I would venture a commentary in nine points.<sup>31</sup>

1. Only by myself becoming conscious I become conscious that I become conscious of myself. Furthermore, I can only become conscious of things when, at the same time, I am conscious of myself. In sum, I am conscious of reality being conscious that I am conscious of reality. Our author says in the *Paratrīśikavivarana*: "Without Consciousness, which is Light itself, no entity which is devoid of the light of manifestation (*aprakāśamanam vapubh*) can acquire existence."<sup>32</sup>

2. Once this intertwined consciousness arises, I become conscious of the distinction between consciousness of things and consciousness of myself, who am experiencing that consciousness. I distinguish reflective self-consciousness from world-consciousness.

3. The third act is to become conscious of the limitations of both: self- and world-consciousness. The two subjects of such a consciousness are neither the Self nor the World, but just my limited *ego*, which is conscious of some limited objects (things), not of the entire world.

4. Only then, as a fourth act, do I become aware that the consciousness of my limitations implies that I am somewhat transcending them. I can go on enlarging the limits of my consciousness, but for how long? I then become conscious that there may be an unsurpassable (*anuttaram*) consciousness, and a world of pure consciousness that has left behind all knowable objects. It is free movement in empty space (*khecari*). Then, as the *Paratrīśikavivarana* says, "Things appear in the supreme consciousness not as reflected images but in their perfect non-distinctiveness, as water in water or flame in flame."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Singh, 49; or Muller-Ortega, op. cit., 90: "However that perceiver whose nature is consciousness and which is self-illuminating, is not in turn perceived by another subject; thus it is termed the Ultimate."

<sup>30</sup> Lilian Silburn points out that for Abhinavagupta *anuttara* denotes "la Réalité" and adds that the word "signifie 'incomparable'—rien n'est supérieur à la Conscience plénire de la Divinité—mais aussi 'inexprimable' si l'on donne à *uttara* son sens de 'spécifications verbales', l'*anuttara* transcendant alors toute distinction" [means "incomparable"—nothing is superior to the plenary Consciousness of Divinity—but also "inexpressible" if its sense of verbal specifications is given to *uttara*] ("Accès au sans-accès. Les voies de la mystique," *Hermès* 1 [1981]: 45).

<sup>31</sup> See my "Five Cross-cultural Theses on Consciousness: The Unknown Knower," in M. Svilar (ed.), *Réflexions sur la liberté humaine* (Berne: Lang, 1988), 133–59.

<sup>32</sup> Singh, 31.

<sup>33</sup> See Gnoli, 861.

But where am I? Where is my ego?

5. I am caught in between. I am body, I am world, *kula, saeculum*. The "I" is not just my *ego*, but the *ego* cannot be left aside, or be destroyed, without the "I" disappearing as well. This is an important point. Many systems of thought (a certain *vedānta*, for instance) in their urge to go always *beyond*, leave Reality *behind*. In order to find consciousness and analyze pure consciousness, many systems tend to neglect and then forget the *kaulika-siddhidam*, "that which enables one to have such achievement,"<sup>34</sup> namely *kaulika*, "that which is related to the whole universe."<sup>35</sup>

This is, as it were, the *status quaestionis*. Now we come to the reflexive question.

6. *Yena vijñāta-mātreyā*: By which knowledge, by means of which measure shall I bring all these elements together? How shall I know? What shall I know? The question is only a question for a questioner. The questioner is always an intellect. The *how* is always how to know. Even for the doing, the question already entails how to know the doing. I am not concerned for my place in the universe, but for the universe in which I also have a place, that is, in which I do not disappear, I who am asking the question, who have become conscious within a body. But, having realized that self-consciousness and world-consciousness are inextricably linked, I cannot ask about the universe in any objective way (realism). Nor can I start with mere consciousness in any subjective manner (idealism). I ask about that Self-consciousness which is World-consciousness. I ask about a World-consciousness of which my *ego* is a sharer. I ask about a World-consciousness of which my environment is a part.

7. My participation can only be such if it is a harmonious part of the whole, if I am at the same time Self and Body, Consciousness and World. *Samatā*, harmony, is the criterium. The whole process involves me. I am neither a mere observer, a researcher, nor a mere actor, a performer. I am part of the problem—and of its solution. This is a recurrent feature of most traditional approaches. The approach entails both the subject-knower and the subject-matter (*abhidhēya*), that is, the subject as such and the object. This intrinsic exigency of the object over the subject, or rather this inner and constitutive relationship between the two, is what requires the purification of the *ego*.

The purity of the subject is not a mere moral requirement: it is an ontological prerequisite. "As long as calmness (*samatha*) is not achieved, the authentic knowledge (*abbijñāna*) will not arise," says Atīśa, the great *mahāyāna* sage of the eleventh century—just to quote from the Buddhist tradition.<sup>36</sup> Only when the stream of my consciousness is quiet will it reflect Reality, just as only when the flow of a torrent quiets in a pond the waters will turn into a proper mirror for the surrounding world. The mental flow has to be superseded, most Indic philosophies will affirm. *Citta-vṛtti nirodha*, says Patañjali: the mental flow has to be brought to a stop.<sup>37</sup>

8. If my *ego* is not the subject of consciousness nor my world its object, what does the act of awakening to consciousness entail? The quick answer of most Indic systems is in one word: realization, enlightenment, liberation.

But the asking about Reality is an act of consciousness that in itself entails my asking about Reality. Who does the asking and what am I asking? All this is given in the very act of

<sup>34</sup> Singh, 32.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>36</sup> *Bodhipathapradipa* 38.

<sup>37</sup> *Yoga-sūtra* I.2.

becoming conscious. To ask myself is only a rhetorical device; to ask a master amounts only to postponing the question. From where does the *guru* know? To ask the world is inappropriate, for the world is the asked about. I cannot ask that pure consciousness about which I am aware when I am being conscious of myself and of the world. It is a self/world consciousness of which my *ego* is a part. This would be a vicious circle, a begging of the question. If my *ego* asks, my *ego* cannot ask a bigger *ego*, up to an infinite "I." It would be a blasphemy and a contradiction. A blasphemy, for my *ego* would then become the judge and possessor of the criterion for a convincing answer. A contradiction, for my *ego*, as a part of the "I," is asking what the real "I" already knows. This is why questioning is not the proper method to remove the veil of *avidya*. Questioning is the very fruit of ignorance. And yet . . .

9. If I ask, it is because the question arises in me. The fact that the question arises in me does not prove, primarily, that I do not know the answer. It shows that I share in the very dynamism of Consciousness unfolding itself. I will set out searching for the answer only when the very question is given to me. I am questioned by the question itself. *Quaestio mibi factus sum*, said St. Augustine.<sup>38</sup> I may question because I do not know, but I am given the consciousness that I do not know, without which the question would not arise. The question springs up not because of my ignorance, but because of the knowledge of my ignorance. In other words, the problem is not our ignorance of the answer, but the awareness that the very question has been given us along with the consciousness of our ignorance.

The true solution, then, will then be not to answer the question, but to solve, that is, to dissolve it. We are at the antipodes of the technocratic method of modern Man. The modern technocratic civilization is characterized by the obsession to find answers without questioning the questions. This is the very meaning of "scientific research." As Abhinavagupta pointedly says, "What is posited as an answer is really no answer."<sup>39</sup>

True thinking, if we use this word for the highest human faculty, does not consist in resolving problems (*pro-ballein*, that which we throw in front of us, the *ob-iecta*). True thinking sets in only once the problems have been dissolved, only once we have reached calmness, peace, harmony, serenity, once we are capable of moving in the void, live in the *khecari*. Authentic meditation, that is the existential medicine for our human condition, consists in sharing in this (urge, dynamism, *élan*, *nexus*, energy, *spanda*, *vimarśa*, *agapē*, *pondus*, contemplation . . .).

If I ask, I can only ask as a "thou," a you who has appeared in consciousness when it is given the gift of asking. The you is the questioner because the questioner is a true questioner only when it is conscious that the question has been given to it (the questioner), that is, when the questioner is conscious that the question arises from another source, the "I." This is the *locus* of the *you*. The "you" is the questioner if the interrogation is genuine. It is the Devī, the you of the I, the you of Śiva.

This is why our text puts the question on the lips of the Devī and is directed to Śiva. *Sri Devī unvaca*, begins the text: "The Goddess said."

This is the Nonary of the beginning of "Philosophy" in this Kashmiri tradition. This is the awakening of humanness, of consciousness. Neither realism nor idealism, objectivism, or subjectivism. It is the very sharing in the *spanda* of Śiva, in the dynamism of Reality.

<sup>38</sup> *Confessions*, X.33 (n. 50). "Interrogatio mea intentio mea," my question (was) my stretching (of myself, of the mind, my gaze), he said a little before (X.6, n.9).

<sup>39</sup> Singh, 22.

## THE TEXT: THE WHAT

### Abhinavagupta's Text

At the risk of being repetitive, we have to remember that we are not dealing with the problem of the Ultimate, but with one single line regarding a description of this *anuttaram*. The question of the *anuttara-tattva* is a central problem in Abhinavagupta, especially in his two commentaries on the *Rudra-yamala-tantra*, the *Paraträikavivaraya* and the *Paraträika-laghuvṛtti*, this latter also known, precisely, as *anuttara-tattva-vimarsinī*.

Here then is our text. We now have to ask not *how* it formulates the question, but *what* it actually says.

It begins with the traditional word *atha*, like most famous texts of the Indic tradition, like the *Yoga-sūtra*, *Brahma-sūtra*, and so on. *Atha*, generally translated as "now," means "thus, with reference to, regarding this, as a commentary to, having said/heard this, the reflection upon, the deepening into, the understanding of" (a text, situation, tradition, problem, etc.). It relates to tradition, and at the same time it sets tradition forth. "You have heard . . . , but now I say unto you. . . ."<sup>1</sup> Only a Master can begin with such words.

*atha granthartho vyakhyate*

"Now, the meaning of the text is to be explained"

*anuttaram iti*

"The Unsurpassable (is) this"

*na vidyate uttaram-adbhikam yatab*

"there is nothing more than, or additional to, it."<sup>2</sup>

We can also translate it as "(that) of which no superior (greater, additional more) is found."

Or, equally possible: "... than which there is no greater."

Or, again, "because there cannot be any further addition."

Or, we can also grammatically translate: "... than which nothing greater (higher, superior) is (can be) known."

The Western question is this: Is it "Unsurpassable" (Singh), "Insuperable" (Silburn), "Ultimate" (Muller-Ortega), "Senza Superiore" (Gnoli), "Sans-Egal" (Padoux) because *there is* nothing greater, or because nothing greater can be *found* or *known*? Is it an ontological or an epistemological statement?

But before we tackle this question, we may have to intercalate some grammatical considerations into the text. A grammatical analysis would yield: *na* means "no"; *uttaram*

<sup>1</sup> See Mt 5:21–22, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Singh, 20.

is a comparative and means upper, higher, superior, better, greater; *anuttaram* is literally *na uttaram*, (that which is) not-surpassable.

*Uttaram* is the comparative. The superlative is *uttamam*, the unsurpassed, the supreme, the highest. *Uttaram* means higher than, sur-passed by, beyond than. And the texts says that there is nothing higher, better, beyond, above, *η* (that).

We may note here that a common noun equivalent to *mokṣa*, *nirvaya*, and the like, in the classical Indic systems of philosophy (Madhava, for instance) is *nibhreyasa*, which literally means "than-which-nothing-better" and is often rendered as *summum bonum* or highest good. "Having-nothing-better" and thus final beatitude, bliss, salvation (Macdonell). "Having-no-better," and thus best, most excellent, and so on (Monier-Williams). We note the similarity.

*Adhikany* means additional, subsequent, later, surpassing, superior, abundant, excellent. *Adhi* is an indeclinable prefix indicating above, over, besides.

*Yatāḥ* is indeclinable; correlated to *tataḥ*, it means "from which, wherefore, since, for, because, whence."

The keyword is here obviously the verb. We have given several possible translations because of the complex root *vid*.<sup>3</sup>

*Vidyate* is the present active and passive, third person of *vid* (sixth *parasmaipada* conjugation) of the verb "to find" (to gain), synonymous with *vindyati*. *Vidyate* is found from the *Vedas* onward. But it could also come from *vid* (fourth *atmānepada* conjugation) and then is the verb "to be, to exist, to have." *Vidyate* is classical Sanskrit.

Normally, *vidyate* in the post-Vedic language means "there is," and *na vidyate* means "there is not," "it does not exist," although it generally demands a genitive when it expresses "I have" or "I have not": "There is a book of me," "of me (a) book there is" (*mama pustakam vidyate*). But *vidyate* could also stand for *vindyat* and then it means "it gains, it finds." In sum, there is a triple root: *vid* (2P), *vid* (6P), *vid* (4A)—meaning to know, to find, and to be, respectively. From the first we have the Sanskrit *veda*, *vidyā* (knowledge); the Greek *εἰδον* (to see, from *εἰδόν*); the Latin *videre* (to see); the German *wissen* (to know), and so on. The second word means to find, discover, acquire, partake, possess. The third is practically the same root *vid*, which, in its meaning of possession and sharing, acquires the sense of the verb "to be, to be existent."

*Vidyate* would then be: "there is" (*il y a, hay, es gibt*—in French, Spanish, and German, respectively). We have already mentioned that originally the three roots were probably the same, and that they were differentiated by the different verbal conjugations.

\*

We can now reflect on the text in order to understand what it says.

*Anuttaram* as a comparative, "non-higher, better, greater," implies a relation, not a substance. We are involved in the process. It is that more than which, or additional to (it), nothing can be (said, found, or thought). Abhinavagupta himself mentions the difference between the *anuttaram* and *anuttaman* and quotes another *agama*, which says, "There is no one to whom the *anuttaman* is unknown which, however, is not known to the wise."<sup>4</sup> Here

<sup>3</sup> W. D. Whitney in his classic *The Roots, Verb-Forms and Primary Derivatives of the Sanskrit Language* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1885), after the forms of the second root *vid*, "to find," breaks his usual conciseness giving just the grammatical forms, and adds, "Doubtless originally the same with the preceding root. In some of their meanings the two are so close together as hardly to be separable; and there are instances, from the *Veda* down, of exchanges between them" (160). Monier-Williams also maintains that the two roots were originally the same.

<sup>4</sup> Singh, 27, or 10–11 of the Singh sanskrit text: *adbyāpi yanna viditam siddbanami bodbasalinam / na capyavidititam kasya kimapyekam-anuttamam.*

we find perhaps the answer to an ever-recurring paradox: the highest reality, the *anuttaman* is "known" by unknowing.

Our author makes one of those Sanskrit twists, and translates the following verse of the original text: *etad guyam mahaagubyam kathayasva mama prabho* by giving preference not to the *prima facie* meaning: "Tell me this secret, this greatest secret, O Lord, who are my very Self (*mama svā*)," but to the reading: "Tell me (*kathayasva*), O my Lord (*mama prabho*), this truth which, though largely unhidden (*maha agubyam*), yet remains a secret."<sup>5</sup> The message is that the secret is a non-secret, it is the Great Unconcealed because of the self-luminous character of the *anuttaman*.<sup>6</sup>

He here follows the great mystical tradition of practically all times.<sup>7</sup> It is beyond knowledge. It is the ground of knowledge. It does not need to be known. Abhinavagupta says, "Even pointing to Highest Reality by the mere word *this* is also limiting it, for such indication is also limitation."<sup>8</sup> In other words, any thinking of transcendence destroys it.<sup>9</sup>

But this is not the case with the negation of the comparative. The *anuttaram*, the unsurpassable, that is, the *nihil maius quo*, the "nothing higher than," is only discovered by those who at the end of the human experience do not reach anywhere, but find that there is *nothing* higher. It is the apophatic mystical way. To say Non-Higher means that we cannot proceed further. And yet, by denying that there is anything higher, we affirm that there is *Nothing* higher. Is that the top? We cannot climb higher; we affirm the Non-Higher. Transcendence is immanent.

The *śloka* 3 of the *Urtext*<sup>10</sup> has the verse: *uttarasya-apianuttaram*, "of the higher even unsurpassable," or "even unsurpassable of all surpassable."<sup>11</sup> By doing so, we state both the existential impossibility of our going higher or knowing anything higher, and the essential impossibility of a Higher. But, third, we are aware that the very consciousness of the Non-Higher entails a certain overcoming of it—not as an ontological possibility, but as a *meontic*<sup>12</sup> awareness: the realm of Nothingness, so deeply meditated upon by Asian philosophers. To say Non-Higher does not entail our affirming the Highest. It implies that we cannot think of something higher nor can there be anything higher, so that there is neither an epistemological nor an ontic way to go higher. And this is all. There is no proper thought of *śūnyata* (emptiness), there is no "being" of nothingness. Nothingness is neither *higher* nor *is*. And yet, the Non-Higher is an openness to an Emptiness about which . . . nothing.<sup>13</sup>

Abhinavagupta gives up to sixteen ways of interpreting the *anuttaram*, all of them complementing one another. We linger only on the first, the most literal, and ultimately the *primum analogatum*.

<sup>5</sup> Singh, 53.

<sup>6</sup> See Muller-Ortega, op. cit., 145, for the grammatical subtleties.

<sup>7</sup> See *Ken U II.3; Tao te ching*; the *jñānājñāna* tradition; *ayvṣṭa, docta ignorantia*, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Singh, 22.

<sup>9</sup> See my *The Silence of God: The Answer of the Buddha* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), *passim*. In Vol. V of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>10</sup> Original text.

<sup>11</sup> "Higher than the highest and also about the highest," according to Muller-Ortega, op. cit., 207. Singh translates, "The *anuttara* or the unsurpassable one is the unsurpassable even of the proximate one," or "*anuttara* means even the answer amounts to no answer" (65). This last version is based on Abhinavagupta's interpretation of the text. See Singh, 76–78.

<sup>12</sup> From Greek *mē-on*, non-being. [Ed. note.]

<sup>13</sup> Later, in the religious hermeneutic of the phrase, Abhinavagupta says: "*uttarasya-pyanuttaram*, the explanation offered is: Listen about *uttara*, i.e., the expansion of Śakti, and also about *anuttara*, i.e., the expansion of Śiva" (Singh, 82).

This interpretation is not epistemological, and only with some caution may we say that it is ontological. It is not a λόγος applied to an ov. It is a *verbum entis*, the very *logos* as the *vac of sat* (although this latter word is not used here). It is the *paravac* (the supreme word) of *brahman*, of Śiva, of Reality (as Abhinavagupta himself says).

"*Anuttara* is that in which a crossing over does not occur."<sup>14</sup> *Utarana* means in fact crossing, passing over. There is no reason, therefore, to ask what this *anuttaram* is. In order to ask, one has to know the *definiendum*, one has to circumscribe it, define it, find its limits, overcome it, and surround it on all sides. One has to know what one is asking for. This is precisely what the discourse on *anuttaram* overcomes. The *anuttaram*, as the negation of a comparative, cannot be closed from the upper side, as it were.

We have already quoted the sentence "That what is posited as an answer is really no answer."<sup>15</sup> This is what Buddha had imparted to his disciples: only when the question no longer arises, is the answer there. The true answer does not appear as an answer. Otherwise, there would be no end to the questioning—about the ground of the answer, and so on, ad infinitum.<sup>16</sup> As our author says, "*Anuttara* is that state in which there is neither question nor answer."<sup>17</sup>

In simpler terms, the talk about God, the Infinite, Reality, the Ultimate, however we may word it, is not an ordinary talk; it is not like any other talk. It is incomparable. It has no point of reference, no basis above or outside itself. Thus it is mysterious. It is neither a thing nor a non-thing. Unlike anything else, it is unsurpassable, it has no *beyond*, no *higher*, no *behind*, there is "no crossing over." So the proper question cannot concern what (it) *is*, or whether (it) *exists*. This is the way we ask about beings, not the way to the *anuttaram*. Any question makes sense only if we somewhat know the *it* about which we ask what it *is*. But there is no previous *it* here. Here it is about the limit, the barrier, or perhaps the source from which all proceeds. We can "see" "it" only if we turn our sight in the opposite direction, not to the source but to the river that gushes out of the invisible source.

"*Anuttara* is that which transcends all."<sup>18</sup> In his commentary, in the *Laghuvṛtti*, on the quoted verse of the third *śloka*, Abhinavagupta writes,

You who when enlightened are greatly fortunate, and whose desire is to show yourself (hear) clearly understand. Because I will describe to you, who are thus enlightened, the nature of the Ultimate which is also the nature of the perceiver, and even of the Highest. . . . I will describe that Ultimate to you, which is to say, I will lead you to realize it directly in your Heart.<sup>19</sup>

It is certainly not a matter of causal induction, as if we affirmed the existence of the source because we see the river. It is not the result of a causal thinking, not a conclusion, not an argument for the existence of anything. Existence itself, the very force of the argument, and the argumperter depend precisely on this source.

The entire Indic tradition is imbued with the idea of that passage of the *Mahabharata* XII.54 quoted by Abhinavagupta and also found in the *Yoga Vasiṣṭha*, echoing many *Upaniṣadic* sayings:

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>16</sup> See my *Silence of God*, op. cit., 101ff.

<sup>17</sup> Singh, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>19</sup> Muller-Ortega, op. cit., 208.

*yasmin sarvam̄ yataḥ sarvam̄  
 yah̄ sarvam̄ sarvatasca yah̄  
 yaḥca sarvam̄ayo nityam̄  
 tasmai sarvatmane namaḥ*<sup>20</sup>

"In whom everything is, from whom everything comes, who is everything and everywhere, who is immanent in all things, eternal, Him, the Self of all do I adore."<sup>21</sup>

Only "pro-nouns" describe "it." It has no noun. Only in relation to beings is "it" described. In "itself" it is *anuttaram*. We could translate this, for our purposes, as:

*"In whom all, from whom all,  
 who (is) all, and who (is) in all directions,  
 who contains all, eternal,  
 to whom, the atman of all, I bow."*

Or,

*"In which all, from which all,  
 It the all, and all around,  
 and which contains all, eternal,  
 It, the universal atman, I praise."*

Or again,

*"I prostrate myself to the sarvatman,  
 the atman which is the in,  
 the from, and the it (the yasmin, the yataḥ, the yah̄)  
 of all things."*

#### Anselm's Text

The West has used this same sentence since at least the time of Seneca: "Quid est deus? Mens universi. Quid est deus? Quod vides totum et quod non vides totum. Sic demum magnitudo illi sua redditur, *qua nihil maius cogitari potest, si solus est omnia, si opus suum et intra et extra tenet.*"<sup>22</sup>

We may bypass Boethius<sup>23</sup> and Augustine,<sup>24</sup> and quote Anselm's *Proslogion* II: "Et quidem

<sup>20</sup> *Paratrisika* 4.

<sup>21</sup> Bäumer translation in Singh, xviii.

<sup>22</sup> "What is God? The mind of the universe. What is God? That of which you see all, and you do not see all. So to Him we give due glory, *than which [glory] nothing greater can be conceived*, if He is everything, and if His work governs everything both inwardly and externally." See *Naturalium quaestionum libri septem* I.13 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961), 10. Lactantius, in quoting Seneca, also says that there is a great divinity, "*magnum nescio quid maiusque quam cogitari potest, cui vivendo operam damus*" [something great—I don't know what—greater than what we may think, and which we serve during our lifetime]. See Juan Francisco Yela, *Séneca* (Madrid: Labor, 1947), 194–95.

<sup>23</sup> *De consolatione philosophiae* III.10.

<sup>24</sup> Properly speaking, Augustine's phrasing has a different meaning: "Neque enim ulla anima unquam potuit poterit cogitare aliquid, quod sit te melius, qui summum et optimum bonum es"

credimus Te esse aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari potest," "We certainly believe that You are something than which nothing greater can be conceived."<sup>25</sup> This line runs through the whole history of Western philosophy.<sup>26</sup>

We do not need to analyze here the "argument." Nor do I intend to delve into the question of whether Anselm's text is an ontological argument or only a critical reflection—as I am inclined to think. The fact is, however, that the Western tradition has considered it as the ontological argument par excellence, whether proving something or not.

The ontological enterprise is the effort at building the bridge from pure thinking to being. God is that entity that puts us on the brink to jump from thinking its "*id quo maius cogitari nequit*" to the existence of such a Being. The jump is done not on the springboard of things, but by relying on pure thinking, trying to think the *maius* and realizing that we cannot do it without its very existence. Thinking leads us to Being.

### The Homeomorphic Equivalent

The two texts have practically the same wording. *Maius* is exactly *uttara*, the only difference being that the root metaphor in the former is mass (greater) and in the latter is space (higher). Incidentally, Anselm also uses *melius* in *Proslogion III*.

"Nothing greater can be thought," or "Nothing better can there be," or "Nothing higher can be found (known)": Do these statements express the same *thought*? What is that *thought*?

The *Devi* (Goddess) spoke by uttering a question: how can the *anuttaram* grant the perfection of the universe? Abhinavagupta tries to answer, or rather tries to make sense of the sacred text by leading us to the realization of the experience described in the text.

The *insipiens* (fool) spoke by uttering an affirmation: *non est Deus*.<sup>27</sup> Anselm tries to rebuke that answer, or rather tries to make sense of the sacred text by making us realize that in the very intellectual experience of our words the acknowledgment of the "reality" of what that name names is included.

Abhinavagupta tries to make sense of the entire human experience of reality following his own tradition. He never doubts the reality of the *anuttaram*. He shows the beauty and power of Siva. He appeals to human experience and tries to enlighten human consciousness so that, from that consciousness, the Whole may emerge in all its harmony.

Anselm tries to refute the fool by showing that the very internal experience of the mental conception entails the existence of God. He never doubts the reality of the Divine. He shows the power of thinking. He appeals to the thinking experience, and tries to enlighten us by showing that, if we are thinking beings, we shall have to acknowledge the existence of God.

The formal "thought," *anuttaram, nihil maius*, is obviously the same. But a thought is a thought if it thinks something. What is the object of this thought? If the object were the same, both our "heroes" would be going in the same direction, but we see that the direction is different. Yet the question remains: are they speaking of the same *referent*? We will have to answer: yes, and no!

*Yes!*—Both, strikingly enough, describe the "referent" in the same way: "That from which nothing is higher." They do not speak of an empirical entity or a mere object of thought.

(*Confessions*, VII.4.6): "For never anybody [any soul] has been able to conceive, or ever will be able to conceive, anything better than you, who are the supreme and best [most perfect] good."

<sup>25</sup> A. C. McGill's translation in *The Many-Faced Argument* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 4.

<sup>26</sup> See Charles Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1965).

<sup>27</sup> "There is no God."

Both mean an Ultimate. It somehow represents the end of the human pilgrimage and the acme of reality itself.

*No!*—Neither of them would admit a Kantian distinction between a *noumenon* to which both are pointing and the *phenomenon* they describe. The nature of that Ultimate cannot be separated from its actual manifestation (revelation), and by no stretch of imagination is Śiva the *Deus* of the Scholastic tradition. Names are not mere labels. The functions of Śiva are not the functions of the God of Christians, and these functions are not accidental, so that a śaiva "God" without the *Devī* would not be Śiva, just as a Christian God without the *Christos* would not be God.

And yet, both play equivalent roles within their respective systems.

Abhinavagupta's *mythos* is *advaitic*. There is no point in showing how to pass from thought to existence when the very thought presupposes existence, when the one does not "exist" without the other. The very awareness of the *anuttaram* is the awareness of both ourselves and the supreme Consciousness. We climb up, as it were, until we find a non-higher, but then we meet the *khecari*, which allows us to move freely in that empty space.

Anselm's *mythos* is dualistic. There is an ontological degradation from the Creator to the creature. "Quaero vultum tuum; vultum tuum, Domine, require," he says in the first chapter of the *Proslogion*, quoting Psalm 27.<sup>28</sup> It comes to a climax when crying: "O tu, Domine, usquequo? Usquequo Domine, oblivisceris nos? Usquequo advertis faciem tuam a nobis?"<sup>29</sup> He needs to understand—and not out of curiosity—the mystery of Reality, for which one needs a pure and sharp eye; he needs to understand because the very understanding is the bridge, the existential bridge to cross over to the other shore.

There is *avidya* and *ahamkara* on the one side, there is *peccatum* and *insipientia* on the other. Both need to be dispelled. On the one side, it is like the clearing of the skies; on the other, it is like a journey to the sun. But is it the same sun?

This is the question to which we replied, "Yes and no." It is the same thing, if we abstract the sun from its rays, its warmth, its manifestations, the people whom the sun illuminates. It is not the same if we include in the sun all that we believe the sun does and is. Here is where comparative religion shows its limits.

This is what we are going to touch upon in a schematic way.

<sup>28</sup> Literally: "I look for your face; O Lord, I ask for your face" (Ps 27:8–9).

<sup>29</sup> "O Lord, until when? Up to when shall you forsake us? Until when shall you turn away thy face from us?"

## 3

## A CROSS-CULTURAL COMMENTARY: THE WHY

Mindful of the intriguing etymology of the word in our subtitle, we now try to *consider*, that is, to bring the *stars together*, to bring the constellations of these two cultures closer.<sup>1</sup> Against the background of our example, we attempt a cross-cultural approach. I have argued time and again that cross-cultural studies do not consist in studying another culture with the categories of one's own culture, but to integrate the vision of the other culture in the very approach to the problem—whereby the problem itself may appear differently.<sup>2</sup>

Cross-cultural studies have at least a threefold function of trying to

1. Better understand and critique either culture (osmosis)
2. Reach a possible mutual fecundation of the cultures concerned (symbiosis)
3. Reckon with the fact that we may come to mutually incompatible positions (incommensurability)

I touch upon these three points only in the light of our case.

### Better Understanding and Critique: Osmosis

We cannot properly understand a *text* without a *context*. But if we know only a single context, we may easily take that context as the universal *texture* of understanding, and so we may tend to absolutize our text. We need to know the context as context and not as an absolute texture. This is only possible if we know at least something about other possible contexts. In order to know well one's own language or religion, one needs to know at least the rudiments of another language or religion.

The normal way toward a better understanding is to be open to critique. This is only possible if a certain osmosis overcomes the danger of simply talking at cross-purposes. We will be very sketchy and imagine a dialogue between our two thinkers. Abhinavagupta may elaborate a critique to Anselm, to which Anselm may respond with a better understanding of his own position.

Abhinavagupta may say, "Your entire way of proceeding makes me assume that you want to have your cake and eat it too. You want to prove, or at least show, that there is a passage from

<sup>1</sup> Anybody engaged in translations will agree that each culture is a constellation. There are at least a dozen of English words for the Sanskrit *dharma*. I have found at least thirty-three Sanskrit vocables for the English *philosophy*.

<sup>2</sup> See my "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?", in G. J. Larson and E. Deutsch (eds.), *Interpreting across Boundaries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 116–36.

the intellectual notion of the *nihil maius* to the existential affirmation that such a thought must correspond to a reality behind it, that the *esse in re* is implied in the *esse in intellectu* when the *intellectus* is filled with the utmost capacity of the *cogitari*.<sup>3</sup>

Abhinavagupta would not have been able to make the etymological pun perhaps already known to Anselm—"cogitari, id est interne coagitare"<sup>3</sup>—but he might have thought it. "You want to pass from Thinking to Being and maintain at the same time that Being is prior, higher, superior to, more perfect than, nay, creator of our thinking. Your intellect, when it understands the utmost limits of what it can grasp, knows concomitantly the reality of the thought so understood. Your thinking is a bridge to transcendence, but once you have established the link, because you are afraid of so-called pantheism, you block the bridge again, unless one pays the toll of your particular *fides*. You can ascend to the living God just by one idea, but then the living God cannot descend to you except in the historical Incarnation."

Abhinavagupta may still add that he detects a certain continuity between the philosophical idea that what is theoretically thinkable may be real if no contradiction is involved, to the more modern attitude that what is technologically feasible must be realized if no major obstacle is found on the way. Are Thinking and Being really so intrinsically connected? Is there not a link between your compulsion to recognize existence in the "highest thinkable" and the modern compulsion to confer existence on the technologically thinkable?

We leave to the followers of Anselm to respond adequately to Abhinavagupta by pointing out factual misunderstandings and possible new interpretations.

Anselm, in his turn, may say to Abhinavagupta, "Your scheme and project are so ambitious that they run the risk of being an exercise in uncritical tautology. We both start from a *fides quaerens intellectum*, but your *intellectus* is incapable of taking a critical look at, and adopting a creative distance in front of, the *fides*. You say that you ground your exposition on experience, but, if one does not share it, there is no way of following, or even understanding you. You simply postulate and assume an *anuttaram*. This is not a problem for you, it is just a datum. But a datum which is not *datum*, not given, to everybody. Is this caste mentality? I hear you saying that praxis, that is, cult and initiation are needed for *nirvikalpa samadhi*. I sympathize with your traditional etymology of *dikṣa*, initiation, as composed of *da*, giving, and *ksi*, destroying, but then you close all the doors of the pure intellect, and demand a total surrender prior to the spiritual discipline. I would like to defend with you the *disciplina arcana*, the need of *fides* in order to understand, but at the same time I attempt a *via media* which you seem to close. One thing is to radically sever the relationship between philosophy and theology, another to lump them together indiscriminately."

Anselm may still add that he detects a certain continuity between the philosophical idea that all is connected to all, so we only need to tap from the stream of life, and the more recent attitude of sharing as much as we can in the joy of life without even trying to transform the very conditions of human existence, which often make it practically impossible for common folks to experience the *anuttaram*. Is the *trika* so sovereign that we have just to play the play?

Abhinavagupta's friends may like to respond properly by hinting at the incapacity of extricating the shadow from the hat—as Dakṣinamurti, the master, often repeated.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Aquinas is still full aware of the etymology: "Dicitur enim cogitare quasi coagitare, id est discurrere et conferre unum cum altero" [for "cogitare" (to think) seems to be equivalent to "coagitare," i.e., "to discuss together"]; we say *cogitare* (to think, to conceive) in the sense of *coagitare*, i.e., to discuss, to compare one thing with another (*De veritate XIV.1, ob.2*). See also *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q.2, a.1, ob.1; *I Sent.*, III.4.5.c., etc. See the Sanskrit *vicāra*, investigation, from *vicarati*, to wander about, which is echoed in the latin *dis-currere*.

### Mutual Fecundation: Symbiosis

Cultural anthropology, and in our times Christian theology in the non-Mediterranean cultural areas, often speaks of inculturation, or better, inter-culturation. It amounts to a mutual fecundation of cultures and religions. When two cultures enter into relationship, mutual borrowings and influences are bound to appear. This may also happen at the philosophical hearth of the thinker. Dialogue leads to change not only our understanding of the other but also our own self-understanding. We know better not only the other; we also know ourselves better. The influence is reciprocal. We change our assumptions. We fecundate each other.

Stepping over many intermediary steps, I envisage that the encounter of the two world-views represented in our sentence may lead to a positive overcoming of all theisms, including atheism, without falling into a negative nihilism of a positivistic nature.<sup>4</sup>

The notion of God as a Supreme Being presents as many intellectual and moral difficulties as the notion of God as Absolute Being. The very evolution of Western thought has shown this. The Divine as a mere asymptotic limit or as a mere illusion of the mind is equally unconvincing. And yet, to throw away the baby with the bathwater is still less acceptable. A theanthropocosmic or cosmotheandric insight might be the fruit of such a fecundation, as I have tried to elaborate elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

The mutual fecundation may be also envisioned by introducing the notion of emptiness or void in the Western metaphysical tradition in a more radical way than has commonly been done. And, on the other hand, a cataphatic approach to Reality and to the Divine may strengthen many Asian philosophies.

Twisting the Anselmian sentence, as is so common in the Indic and Christian traditions with many scriptural texts, we may say that the "*aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari potest*" *nihil est*, and that *ipsum nihil nequit cogitari, quia non est (non est esse)*.<sup>6</sup> The impossibility of thinking anything greater leads us to the threshold of emptiness, *śūnyata*. God is that *nihil quod cogitari nequit* (Nothingness that cannot be conceived). Not only Meister Eckhart knew something about it. Juan de la Cruz writes in the very frontispiece of his *Subida al monte Carmelo*: "Ya por aquí no (h)ay camino. Y en el Monte nada."<sup>7</sup> Thinking is only the *viaticus* for the *homo viator*.

I may take another example. We have already made reference to the split between epistemology and ontology as the most salient feature of modern Western philosophy. The "slumber" of an a-critical and premodern "dogmatism" was supposed to give way to the true critical awareness of Western modernity. It may be, but then modern philosophy becomes unable to heal the split between subject and object.<sup>8</sup>

Classical Indic thinking is certainly not a-critical. The theory of knowledge (*pramaṇavada*), embracing the analyses of right cognition (*pramaṇa*), means of cognition (*pramāṇaya*),

<sup>4</sup> See my book *The Rhythm of Being* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), also in Vol. X, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>5</sup> See "Colligite Fragmenta: For an Integration of Reality. Alienation to At-Oneness," in *Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova University*, 1977, 19–91. Now in Vol. VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>6</sup> "That than which nothing greater can be conceived" is nothingness. Nothingness cannot be conceived because it is not (it is not Being).

<sup>7</sup> "And from here there is no more way. And on the Mountain Nothing."

<sup>8</sup> Kant defines the dogmatism of metaphysics as "das Vorurteil, in ihr [der Metaphysik] ohne Kritik der reinen Vernunft fortzukommen" [the prejudice of being able to proceed in metaphysics without any critic of pure reason] (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B, xxx).

object of knowledge (*prameya*), subject of knowledge or knower (*pramata*), and the validity of acquired knowledge (*pramayya*), proves this sufficiently.

My submission is that a critical reflection leading to an elaborated epistemology does not need to be achieved at the expense of a divorce between epistemology and ontology. The epistemological endeavor is already an ontological activity. The theory of knowledge is at the same time a theory of being.

On the other side, the ontological insight of many Indic systems of thought could and should learn from the Western experience of the proper *ontonomy* of the sciences, and their incidence on human life, without being tied to a rigid ontology.

The ambiguity of our Sanskrit text is an example of this point. Is *anuttaram* that higher than which nothing can be *thought* (or found by thought, of course), or is that higher than which nothing can *be*?

Philologists will most probably say that *na vidyate* is simply one form of the many verbs by which Sanskrit expresses an absence. All of them have Greek and Latin connotations.

We could divide the pertinent Indo-European roots into prevalently static and predominantly dynamic ones.

Among the roots underlining consistency, staticity, firmness, and the like, we have

- The root *wes*, remaining, abiding, dwelling, like the Sanskrit *vas*
- The root *sta*, stand, from which the Latin *stare* and *existere* (*ek-sistere*)
- The root *es*, to be, in Greek *eivai*, in Latin *esse* and also *sedere* (to sit)

Among the dynamic roots we have

- The root *bhu*, to come into being, to become, in Greek *γίγνομαι* (to be born), *φύομαι* (to come into being), *φύσις* (nature), *φύω* (to grow); in Latin *fieri* (to become), *gignere* (to beget, to bear), and also *devenire* (to arrive)
- The root *vrt*, to turn, revolve, roll, go on, proceed, and therefore to continue, exist, be found, be engaged, concerned, and so on, in Latin *vertere*; in German *werden*
- Another root that seems to move in between: that polysemic root *vid* that we mentioned earlier: *uttaram na vidyate*, nothing higher exists, is there around, is thought—the three-in-one, in an inseparable way.

So far the philologist has spoken, but the philosopher may have still something to add.

To turn is to become, and to find is to come to know that something is there, that is, that it is present. It is this *presence* that both *being there* and finding, *knowing* this presence. In this sense, "There is nothing higher" amounts to saying that "there is nothing else to be found, to be known as presence, as existing." "There cannot be anything higher" amounts to "there cannot be anything *thought* higher."

But we cannot build an argument because there is no *passage* from knowledge to existence, from thought to reality, since thought already belongs to Reality. God is primarily not "aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari potest" but "something than which nothing greater can *be*": *uttaram na vidyate*. And this "being" implies and entails the "thinking," not vice versa. But this relation is not causal. And this is why the "argument" proves nothing: it only convinces those who are already convinced. It shows the presence of thinking within being, but not the passage from thinking to being.

And yet it is not the same to know and to be. Both are different, but, because they are not separable, there is no real passage from the one to the other, neither from thinking to being

nor the other way round. If being expresses itself in thinking, it is this latter that is conscious of it, so thinking does not need to transcend itself in order to "reach" being.

Thinking does not prove Being. There is no ontological argument. Nor does Being necessarily translate itself into Thinking. Being can be unthinkable as much as Thought can also think "Unbeing" in the sense of error. Thinking can correct itself, but only by itself. Thinking can find the logical rules, it can discover its own structure and find the adequate criteria for truth. But it cannot lean on Being independently of being conscious of it, of its consciousness of it. Being without Thinking cannot be the foundation, the ground of thinking. The two belong inextricably together, but without confusion. The "existit (the Non-Higher, the *anuttara*, the *quo maius non*) et in intellectu et in re" has no meaning here because the *res* is already tinged with the *intellectus*, although they are not the same.

This is the *advaita* intuition. *Intellectus* and *res* are inseparable—by the intellect, of course—for only the intellect can separate. At the same time, the very intellect makes the distinction between the two. And this distinction is vital for the intellect. It could not live, it could not think without this intrinsic assumption that its thinking operation is also an ontic activity. But Being remains free and is not "obliged" by the rules of thinking. They are inseparable, but true thinking cannot go on its own. It has to follow, it has to obey Being. This obedience is precisely thinking—not the other way round.

Nicholas of Cusa is right in giving expression to the prevailing mood of Western culture when he reformulates the Anselmian phrase as "hoc quo nihil maius esse potest,"<sup>9</sup> and consequently he calls it *maximum*.<sup>10</sup> He has passed from the *cogitari* to the *esse*, and this is the essence of the Anselmian argument.

The Thinking/Being paradigm is the ultimate pattern of this particular human approach to Reality. We identify or distinguish and qualify the relationship, but it always remains that the door to Being is Thinking.<sup>11</sup> Thinking is the bridge—to transcendence.

Anselm's argument operates within this scheme and either those who approve or those who reject it accept the same pattern.

Abhinavagupta's and Anselm's considerations do not refer to the Highest but only to the Non-Higher. Neither Abhinavagupta speaks of an *uttaram* nor does Anselm write about an *ens perfectissimum*. But, while for Anselm the subject of the sentence is God in whom we believe and whom we want to understand, for Abhinavagupta the epithet itself is the subject that we want to clarify. We reach a point where either Thinking alone or both Thinking and Being stop. We cannot proceed further. We cannot jump. And precisely this knowledge that there is no possible jump with the intellect is what allows us to speak of it. The jump would be, if at all, not from Non-Higher to Highest, but into Nothingness.

Kashmiri Śivaism is consistent: the way to reach the Absolute is a no-way. This is the traditional *anupaya* or no means (*na upaya*), no way, no instrument, no mediation in order to "attain" what we improperly may call "the supreme goal."<sup>12</sup> Enlightenment is *nirvikalpa*,

<sup>9</sup> That than which nothing greater can be.

<sup>10</sup> See Eduard Zellinger, *Cusanus-Konkordanz* (München: Max Hueber, 1960), for the pertinent references.

<sup>11</sup> See my *Thinking and Being*, in *Du Vrai, du Beau, du Bien* (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 39–42; *Identity and Noncontradiction: Two Schemes of Intelligibility*.

<sup>12</sup> See Bettina Bäumer, "Die Unvermitteltheit der höchsten Erfahrung bei Abhinavagupta," in G. Oberhammer (ed.), *Transzendenzerfahrung, Vollzugshorizont des Heils* (Wien: De Nobili Research Library, 1978), 61–79.

an overcoming of all *vikalpas* or conceptualizations of all sorts. We have here a trait common to most Indic spiritualities.<sup>13</sup>

What interests us here is to detect another ultimate pattern of human awareness. It is formed by the *trika* of Being, Word, and Thinking. The primordial Word or the *para-vak* of the Kashmiri tradition has not a merely mediating function between Being and Thinking. It is a third, irreducible element in the very fabric of Reality. The *brahmanic* tradition speaks of *sabda-brahman*, and the more existential approaches, like the Jaina and Buddhist ones, in their scriptures constantly mention body, mind, and speech as the three indispensable ingredients of any complete approach to anything real. Something unthinkable is not necessarily ineffable.

To become aware of different patterns of approach to the Real, including a different understanding of Reality, provides a means for deepening and completing the insights of different cultures and philosophies.

In our example, *first of all*, we situate both the Anselmian and the Abhinavaguptian worlds within their respective contexts, without absolutizing either of them.

*Second*, we become aware of their respective limits and presuppositions.

Not only does Anselm assume that there is a jump from Thinking to Being, but the anti-Anselmians as well, like Thomas Aquinas and Kant, agree that we can reach God by other methods or another type of reason. There is a way from Thinking to Being. This is so much so that, even when the function of the intellect is reduced to calculating, Modern Science will say that, thanks to intellectual calculus, it will predict the actual behavior of things. We find the mathematical laws of aerodynamics, and planes do fly in the air. In a word, epistemology is the bridge to ontology.

On the other hand, not only Abhinavagupta but a great number of other Indic schools assume that there is an abyss between Being and Thinking. To be sure, there is a bridge formed by the Word, but this bridge can only be traversed in a single direction: from Being to Word, and then in the two directions from Word to Thinking and back to Word, but not necessarily to Being. Reality does not need to be exhaustively intelligible.

This gives us, *third*, an opportunity to deepen and complement the respective insights.

### Irreducible Attitudes: Pluralism

No amount of human effort at overcoming thinking can ever eliminate both the narrow spots of thinking and the fact that the very process of transcending thinking is accompanied by a thinking process. The thinking capacity of Man is a fellow traveler in anything that Man does. To fall into irrationalism would mean to abandon humanness: we would cease to be both human and humane. We may overcome thinking, we may well *think* that Reality is not totally intelligible, and that Thinking and Being do not coalesce, but we cannot abdicate thinking. To say that not everything is governed by the principle of noncontradiction does not imply that this principle is not valid in the sphere of diction, of the *logos*.

In other words, a deep plunge into the diverse cultures of the world may lead to the discovery of the mutual incompatibility between different systems of life and thought among human traditions throughout the ages. They are irreducible to a common denominator, or to one another. We may conclude that they are mutually incommensurable. This is the place of pluralism.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Lilian Silburn (to whom we owe the most remarkable studies on this tradition), "Les trois voies et la non-voie dans le Sivaïsme nondualiste du Cachemire," *Hermès* 1 (1981): 141–200.

<sup>14</sup> See my "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel. A Meditation on Non-Violence," *Cross Currents* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 197–230; "Religious Pluralism: The Metaphysical Challenge," in L.

The irreducibility may perhaps be better described by quoting the Buddhist extreme of refusing to think of the abyss between the absolute and the relative, that is, the chasm between existence and nonexistence. The very attempt to "prove" an *uttamam* would be branded as intellectual pride and human foolishness.

Santideva says in his *Bodhi-carya-avatara* IX.146, as quoted by Atīśa,<sup>15</sup> "Why make up causes for an entity that (already) exists? Or again, if it does not exist, what need to find causes for it?"<sup>16</sup> Atīśa himself uses the popular Indic expression *kha puṣpam* (sky flower) to indicate absurdity: "An existent's arising is impossible; a non-existent's is like flowers in the sky; for a thing to be both is absurd fallacy; so neither do they originate together."<sup>17</sup>

To come to our example, we may say briefly, "Existenz ist kein Prädikat"<sup>18</sup> is the phrase of Kant criticizing Anselm. But, except for Nietzsche's "Sein ist kein Wert,"<sup>19</sup> the *esse* of Anselm is the highest value: "*Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid quo maius cogitari non valet, et in intellectu et in re.*"<sup>20</sup>

On the other side, we find that the very notion of existence is a *vikalpa*, a thought construct. We cannot go higher. And yet there is a Highest of another "nature" altogether, as the *Mayūrīya-upaniṣad* 11 so powerfully affirms. But this *uttamam*, as we have already mentioned, is so all-pervadingly present that we do not need knowledge, except for becoming aware that it is present as an unfathomable depth in everything. This is the ground for many utterances, teachings, in many traditions: it is known as unknown, and those who know it do not know it, and the like. But we cannot abdicate our intellect, by the very act of realizing that incompatibility is already an act of the intellect itself.

We have to recognize, besides, that human experience of at least the last six to eight thousand years of thinking has not merged all those worldviews into one. We have also experienced the deleterious effects of such a unifying tendency. Why not recognize, with our highest intellectual act, that the intellect is not the absolute arbiter of Reality? So that the existence of irreconcilable systems of thought is not a *de facto* weakness of our intelligence, but a *de jure* feature of human condition. This is pluralism.

In short, there are mutually irreducible worldviews. I have introduced the notion of *kosmology*, not meaning different worldviews (cosmologies) but different worlds. Each *kosmology* is not only a different discourse about the universe, but a different universe of discourse. Human traditions may be incommensurable, and yet they belong together like the circumference and the radius.

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To sum it up, the experiential "argument" of Abhinavagupta, true to the name of the author (*Abhinava* = always new, and *gupta* = hidden), is not an argument, it is not a *cog-*

S. Rounier (ed.), *Religious Pluralism* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), 97–115. Now both in Vol. VI, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>15</sup> R. Sherburne's translation from Atīśa's quotation of the text; see *A Lamp for the Path and Commentary by Atīśa* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 136.

<sup>16</sup> See Louis de la Poussin's translation: "La chose qui existe n'a que faire de causes; la chose qui n'existe pas n'a que faire de causes" (Paris: Bloud, 1907).

<sup>17</sup> *Bodhi-patha-pradīpa* 48, in Sherburne, op. cit., 136.

<sup>18</sup> "Existence in not a predicate."

<sup>19</sup> "Being is not a value."

<sup>20</sup> "There undoubtedly exists something than which nothing greater can be conceived, both in the intellect and in reality."

*tatio*, and much less a *deductio*, but an always renewed and hidden personal experience, an *experiri*, a going through an existential path to realization; a becoming real, a sharing in the very ascent toward the Non-Higher; and not a way of finding the truth, or of reconciling *intellectus* and *fides*, but a way of being in harmony with Reality, this harmony being the always hidden soul of the Real.



## SECTION XIX

### CAN THEOLOGY BE TRANSCULTURAL?\*

Our question is new, biased, Christian, and legitimate.

It is *new* because it entails a degree of historical reflection, critical self-introspection, academic scholarship, and secondary literature not available in other periods of Christian history.

Our question is *biased* because it assumes a particular understanding of theology and of religion that gives rise to our problem about a transcultural theology. Seen from the outside, the primordial African religions, for instance, present a sort of common "religious negritude" that may lead one to ask about their transcultural values; but, in fact, Africans did not ask this question—until timidly in modern times, under Christian influence.

Our question is *Christian* because it is based on a kind of unformulated expectation that there is a unique and "providential" proof that Christianity is, in some sense, above cultures.

Finally, our question is *legitimate*, for, although it suggests a positive answer and evinces intellectual and vested interests, nothing prevents us from coming up with a qualified answer or even a plain "no."

The Second Person of the Trinity, to use traditional language, "became" incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth, but Jesus himself never questioned whether he should or could have been born elsewhere and "elsewhen." He was the "son of Mary" and the "Son of Man." Early Christians introduced the idea of the "fullness of times" and, much later, the centrality of space (Israel, Jerusalem, Rome . . .).

Likewise, Christian experience became incarnated in the surrounding cultural milieu, and so theology was born. But theology did not question whether its *theologoumena* also made sense to peoples of other cultures. Later Christians reflected on their formulations and came to consider them the last word in space and time. When confronted with other cultural patterns, Christians used to speak about "scandal and folly,"<sup>1</sup> rather than admit that Christian theology is the fruit of this tacit cultural dialogue. The dialogue was called "refutation" or "apologetics."

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\* From Paul F. Knitter (ed.), *Pluralism and Oppression: Theology in World Perspective*, Annual Publication of the College Theology Society 34 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 3–22.

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Cor 1:23.

I am oversimplifying the picture, for there were some thinkers well aware of the implicit dialogue. Nevertheless, the situation of dialogue was hardly reflected upon in an explicit manner. In other words, the classical way in which Christian theology has moved through the centuries has been, by and large, as if theology were nontemporal, as if time and space were not theological categories. The troubling idea of a possible development of dogma emerged only in the last century. Still today, hardly any theologian dares speak of the "mutation" of dogma; most of them talk only of "development." *Aggiornamento*<sup>2</sup> is all right, *retractatio* is abhorrent, and mutation, unthinkable. *Quod semper et ubique* has been a Christian slogan.<sup>3</sup> *Eppur si muove!*<sup>4</sup> Only recently, and quite timidly, has a sociology of knowledge begun to enter the awareness of Christian theologians.

Throughout history, the official documents of the churches hardly acknowledged the spatiotemporal boundaries of their statements. Truth was considered to be a-temporal. What was valid for Constantinople was considered valid for the entire world; the pontifical documents tolerating witch-hunting have never been formally withdrawn. It all looked as if the theological enterprise were truly for a world without end. Implicit was the assumption that the theological activity was somehow above the cultural mutability of purely human affairs.<sup>5</sup> Theology was considered to be above culture.

Let me make this point clearer. Nobody would deny that sound theological activity requires a critical mind, a sensitive heart, and an acute power of reflection. The question under discussion is whether such theological activity is tied to a particular type of culture; whether we need to belong to a particular culture or set of cultures in order to receive, understand, reflect upon the Christian fact—even to believe in it. Is theology a transcultural value? Ultimately, we have to ask whether the "Christic Fact" is not already a cultural fact.

Nor will anyone deny that every human statement is clad in temporal fashions and spatial features. Our question asks whether Christ "in a fashion which transcends the wisdom of all his interpreters"<sup>6</sup> has a universal message, independent of all cultures. Yet our problem goes even deeper, for we must ask who or what is this Christ beyond and above interpretations. Or, from a less Protestant and more Catholic perspective, the question concerns the so-called substantial, and thus immutable and perennial, core of a divinely revealed *depositum fidei*.

<sup>2</sup> "Updating": an expression used by Pope John XXIII and, in general, after the Vatican Council II. [Ed. note.]

<sup>3</sup> [Only] what [has been believed] always and everywhere [must be believed by us]. See "In ipsa item catholica ecclesia magnopere curandum est ut id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est. Hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum" [Moreover, in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense "Catholic"], as St. Vincent of Lerin wrote in his *Commonitorium* in the year 434 (PL 50.639).

<sup>4</sup> "And yet, it does move!" as Galileo Galilei said, referring to the famous pendulum. [Ed. note.]

<sup>5</sup> The pontificate of Pius XII in the Roman Catholic Church might be considered the acme of this mentality. "The Catholic Church does not identify herself with any culture: her very essence forbids it" (Pius XII, speech to the International Congress of Historical Sciences, September 7, 1955 [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1955, 681]). (My translation from the original French text.)

<sup>6</sup> R. H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 2. It is clear that our perspective here does not attempt a typology such as that implicit in Troeltsch (*Die Sozialleben der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1912]), or the fivefold typology by Niebuhr, or the fourfold by Rupp (*Christologies and Cultures* [The Hague: Mouton, 1974]). As a matter of fact, my threefold division could be considered merely formal, and thus not an alternative to the above-mentioned typologies.

Let me put it in an Asian way: What is the peculiar core that transmigrates from culture to culture and is born again and again in different forms? Is Swahili theology a reincarnation of Greek theology? Is the *karman* of Jon Sobrino a reincarnation of Cyril of Alexandria or, perhaps, Joachim of Fiore? In other words, how does the law of *karman* work in theology?

We shall distinguish three types of answers. I am fully conscious that there is no neutral viewpoint in religious and cultural matters. My perspective is based on the simple observation that there have been Christians throughout the ages who have interpreted themselves or their context in a threefold manner.

## 1

## THE SUPRACULTURAL CLAIM

A certain type of Christian reflection claims to be above any culture, even though at times it shuns the very word "theology." Karl Barth and Pius XII can serve as examples. The Christian message is supernatural; the Christian revelation is the judgment on all religions; Christianity—when rightly understood—stands above all cultural constructions of humanity. The Church is the eschatological and supernatural human family: *signum levatum inter nationes* (Vatican Council I), *sacramentum mundi* (Vatican II).<sup>1</sup> While religion and culture are human constructs, Christian faith comes from God; it is not the human effort to ascend to the Divine, but the fruit of the descent of the Divine itself, as God deigned to manifest Himself to the world.

Contemporary questions about inculturation, adaptation, "indigenization," and the like often assume that the Christian fact lies above all cultural diversities and has therefore a right of citizenship among all world cultures. Christianity stands above all cultures and can be incarnated in any of them. When, in such an incarnation, something is left behind or rejected, this very fact is taken to prove that the discarded doctrine or custom was not fully human. "The Church rejects nothing of all that is valuable and good in any culture and religion": this is a Christian attitude, at least fifteen centuries old, and repeated in unequivocal terms both by the Vatican Council II and the statements of the World Council of Churches.

To be sure, the evangelist, missionary, or theologian is advised to reach that naked *kenosis*, that mystical core, that supernatural faith that can be incarnated in any human culture. The Christian event is seen as a supracultural fact—and, if until now it has adopted and adapted a certain garb, this was due to historical contingencies and/or the predominance of a particular culture over others; but, in itself, *per se*, nothing can prevent it from "taking flesh" in the most remote and, for the Western taste, most exotic cultures.

For over thirty years, I have been personally grappling with this problem after having been taught, for the previous thirty years, that the Church as a supernatural entity could be at home everywhere. I do not doubt the intention—and even good intention—of such an attitude. I only detect a contradiction in the intent itself. I used to ask the question whether, in order to be a Christian, one ought to be spiritually a Semite and intellectually a Westerner. My partners in dialogue would readily admit that we should not confuse the Mediterranean garb of Christianity with its transcendent, mystical, and supracultural core. I agree.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, my sympathies are for authentic mysticism. But neither religion in general,

<sup>1</sup> Respectively: a sign standing high amid all nations; sacrament of the world.

<sup>2</sup> See my brief paper "Deporre il manto mediterraneo," *Humanitas* (1962): 876–79, which, in the euphoria of the Second Vatican Council, was all too well received but without realizing its far-reaching consequences.

nor Christianity in particular, can be reduced to a formless, silent, mystical core. As soon as the *myein*<sup>3</sup> becomes conscious, and much more when it is translated into *legein*,<sup>4</sup> it has to take names and forms (*nāma* and *rūpa*, the Indic traditions would say) that are no longer supracultural, but expressions of particular cultures.

The standard answer is that we have to do with a transcendental relation that takes particular shapes and forms in different cultures. This has also been my own position in particular contexts. But this answer works well only under one assumption, and presents an intrinsic difficulty, or rather an inner contradiction if generalized cross-culturally.

The *assumption* is what we can call the "theistic myth" proper to a limited set of cultures. It assumes in fact that "it has pleased God" to incarnate in a particular culture and to make it the vehicle of a supracultural fact, despite the imperfections of that culture. If there is a free and sovereign God, Creator of heaven and earth and Lord of history, nobody can prevent this God from doing whatever or choosing whomever He wills. In other words, the Christic event may be said to be supracultural, but the awareness of that event, let alone its interpretation, is far from being supracultural, for it assumes a set of beliefs that make sense only within a given cultural pattern. We can, therefore, speculate—as it often has been done—that it is indeed providential that the Greeks came first, the Germanic tribes later, and the peoples of the East and of Africa will now "rejuvenate" and enliven Christianity. It is a legitimate thought and, at least since Tertullian, a factual one.<sup>5</sup>

But there is an intrinsic *difficulty*, which soon becomes a contradiction. Theology is said to be free to formulate, explain, and narrate the Christian event in the language of any culture. This works well as long as the picture of the new culture is somewhat homogeneous to and compatible with the picture of the older culture. But the conflict becomes unavoidable when this is not the case. The new interpretation, in fact, is rejected when it proves incompatible with the existing Christian tradition. But, in this rejection, traditional Christian criteria are used, of course. This means that there seems to be a hidden agenda at work when the Christic event is held as sovereignly supracultural. The old pattern remains normative. Perhaps in an African milieu Christians might be allowed to celebrate the Eucharist and say "Pork of God" instead of "Lamb of God." There would be more resistance to permitting the Eucharist to be celebrated with tea and potatoes, or perhaps with *soma*<sup>6</sup> alone. But can the Christic event be culturally incarnated in a world in which there is no God as Supreme Being and no history as the scenario of revelation? Which supracultural criterion do we use to condemn all those "atheistic" and a-historical cultures, if not the criteria deduced from a particular interpretation of that allegedly supracultural Mystery?

Where do we draw the line? I would argue that, until now, without a certain Semitic and Hellenic mind-set we are not even able to understand what Christianity is all about. The meaning of revelation, the notion of History, the idea of a personal God, and the like are not even understandable without a particular *forma mentis*; such notions are not cultural invariants. Decades ago, I called for the de-kerygmatization of Christ in

<sup>3</sup> To be initiated into the Mystery.

<sup>4</sup> To speak.

<sup>5</sup> See my "Chosenness and Universality: Can Both Claims Be Simultaneously Maintained?" in P. Puthanangady, *Sharing Worship: Communicatio in Sacris* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1988), 229–50; now in Vol. III of this *Opera Omnia*. The entire book is an eloquent example of an Indic theology respectful of, but not subservient to, tradition.

<sup>6</sup> Fruit juice for sacrifices in the *Vedic* tradition. [Ed. note.]

order to free him from any dogmatic proclamation.<sup>7</sup> Today I wonder if we should also de-historicize him.

The only consistent answer would imply renouncing any claim of being above all culture and speak of the "scandal" of concreteness and the challenge of the historical Christian revelation. We were all "Gentiles" and had to bow before the historical facts of a God incarnate. This leads to the second option.

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<sup>7</sup> See my *Die vielen Götter und der eine Herr* (*Beiträge zum ökumenischen Gespräch der Weltreligionen*) (Weilheim: O. W. Barth, 1963).

## THE SUPERCULTURAL CLAIM

Let us then be "humbly audacious" and not be afraid to call things by their proper names. It is not true that theology is a *logos* on God above and beyond culture. The clear fact is that Christianity bears the seal of a historically precise, and superior, culture. Christ may have been born poor, but he belonged to an ancient and refined culture. He was even of a royal family.<sup>1</sup> He was a *ksatriya*. Christian revelation makes no sense in an uncultured climate, or in a "primitive" civilization. It requires a certain type of culture, a particular understanding of human history, a refinement of civilization. Within a certain human development there are, indeed, many possibilities, and there is no difficulty in accepting different cultural garbs to express the core of the Christic fact; but this requires a certain degree of evolution—a superior culture that has overcome the inferior stages of human civilization. The old so-called indirect methods of evangelizing, which the French often renamed with the euphemism of "*évangélisation de base*," were based on this idea of preparing the ground by first civilizing the natives, so that they could at least grasp what the missionaries were going to preach.<sup>2</sup>

Even though Christianity did not descend from heaven, chemically pure and supranatural, it does belong to a superior culture and can become inculcated only among people with a certain amount of cultural sophistication. It presupposes a particular understanding of humanity. The first Christian missionaries in Korea had first to convince the natives that the human being is a sinner in order to preach redemption to them. We may not (yet?) ask whether we can understand the Bible without computer language, but without a written culture, what we call Christianity today would make little sense. The human race is evolving, and Christianity belongs to the superior strata of that evolution. According to Scripture, the Christic event took place "at the end of times."<sup>3</sup> We can understand, therefore, why the West today dominates the world and why Western culture has spread all over the planet.<sup>4</sup> We may discuss how important a Plato or a Śaṅkara are for theology; but with a Siberian *shaman*, there is not much we can do. In fact, we don't have to be dreamers to recognize that, today, all the peoples of the world are trying to imitate the West and are therefore accepting, more or less uncritically, Christian infrastructures.

<sup>1</sup> Lk 1:27.

<sup>2</sup> See my "Indirect Methods in the Missionary Apostolate: Some Theological Reflections," *Indian Journal of Theology* 19 (1970): 111–13.

<sup>3</sup> See Heb 1:2, etc.

<sup>4</sup> In his *Christianity in World History* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964), Arend Th. Van Leeuwen is a sort of Hegel *redivivus* trying to link the linear development of history with the unfolding of Christian revelation. His other books, *Prophecy in a Technocratic Era* (New York: Scribner's, 1968), and *Development through Revolution* (New York: Scribner's, 1970), follow the same line. See *Ecumenical Review* 24 (1972): 107–9, and Rupp, op. cit., 232ff. for a review of his books.

As much as we may abhor apartheid, we do practice it theologically, under other names and more subtle attitudes. The "option for the poor" and the Sermon on the Mount give ample food for thought and material for preaching, but their demands are taken only so far. The lilies of the fields<sup>5</sup> are fine, but we do not know what to do with the weeds and tares.<sup>6</sup> What place can they have in the Kingdom? Bismarck was more sincere than many theologians when he said that with the Sermon on the Mount one could not run an empire. After all, the Christian crusaders, conquerors, kings, and merchants also brought a higher form of civilization. The cross was accompanied by the menace of the sword, but was then followed by the "blessings" of the machine. It is all deeply intertwined.

Where do we draw the line? We all have a particular idea of humanness and humanization. Christian theology belongs to the higher echelons. *De catechizandis rudibus*,<sup>7</sup> wrote St. Augustine in the year 400. Can everybody belong to the "world Church"? Can the culturally poor, "savages," prostitutes, primitives do so? Where are our *loci theologici*? Only among the "developed" countries? Or, perhaps, also among peoples "on the way to development"—but not among those who resist being "civilized"? Can one "Christianize" without civilizing?

To be sure, theology as a conscious activity and critical reflection entails a certain degree of intellectual power. But does this also require assuming a hierarchical view of cultures, or to speak about theology in an elitist manner that screens the raw materials suited for theology to make sure they are not too raw?

De facto, Christian theology, from the last millennium up to our times, has been linked with a certain complex of cultural superiority. This, however, was not always so, as we realize when we read Augustine between the lines and discover his nostalgia for the superior civilization of pagan Rome, or when we listen to the emperor Julian and feel his scorn at the lack of culture among Christians. We learn that Christians were by no means a cultural elite when we read Celsus, or study the centuries of "barbarian" theology, or listen to Nietzsche, or sit at the feet of some *vedantic* master ridiculing the rough mentality of Christian missionaries. Wassilij Rozanov (1856–1919), that brilliant philosopher of religion, once said<sup>8</sup> that Western Christianity did pay heed to the words of Christ, but never took interest in looking at his face. Besides his words (collected in the Scripture), Christ has left us an icon of life.

Yet, today, can we really defend a theology not linked with a certain degree of human sophistication?

Without going to extremes, we can say that the reaction against academic or "sitting" theology is healthy. Furthermore, we need not only a contemplative theology, or a "kneeling theology" (Hans Urs von Balthasar), but an active and practical theology. Even more, we need a theology in which *logos* and *theos* can once again mean "Word" and "Mystery." We have only to listen to the cries of so-called tribals in India, or the accounts of so many witnesses all over Africa, to realize the burdens of our doctrinal superstructures and the limits of our historical interpretations of the Christic event—as if History were synonymous with Reality. And so, we have forgotten that theology is not for theologians but for the people.<sup>9</sup> Are we going to disqualify the so-called theology of liberation—better called "theology of life and

<sup>5</sup> See Mt 6:28.

<sup>6</sup> See Mt 13:27.

<sup>7</sup> "How to catechize rough people."

<sup>8</sup> See *Das dunkle Antlitz. Metaphysik des Christentums*, in *Russische Religionsphilosophen. Dokumente* (Heidelberg: L. Schneider, 1956), 115.

<sup>9</sup> "Johann Strauss did not write his waltzes for musicologists but for dancers and lovers" (Frederick Franck, "The Cosmic Fish," *Cross Currents* 36 [1966]: 263).

death"<sup>10</sup>—because it does not fit into our academic theological language or does not use "scientific" methodology?

I submit that doing theology in culturally different worlds today demands a *kenosis* and a mystical insight that does not require any belief in a superior culture.

Yet each period in time and each community in space draws the line on cultural requirements at different levels. St. Paul drew his bottom line by maintaining that at least one should be able, first, to understand, and then to believe, that there is a rewarding God.<sup>11</sup> Others have been stricter, and others are ready to be more generous.

To offer some extreme but telling examples: for some centuries the "native" peoples from Asia and Africa were not considered fit to become priests, let alone bishops, in the Catholic Church. A native Church was therefore simply not possible. Today the same Church considers African polygamy incompatible with Christian ethics—but it has no major problems with atomic weaponry. In Roman Catholic theological circles in India, the stiff prohibition of *communicatio in sacris* is breaking down, and a Hindu-Christian theology is developing that would have been viewed as utterly impossible some half a century ago.<sup>12</sup> The line is movable, and each particular community in time and space draws it differently.<sup>13</sup> There may be a minimum of cultural sophistication, but this minimum is fluid. We cannot prove a priori that theology requires an objectively superior culture.

So let us examine the third possible option.

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<sup>10</sup> The expression is of the Salvadorian Baptist pastor Marta Benavides, as reported by R. F. Bulman in his article "Buddha and Christ," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 24 (1987): 72. I would even call it "theology of life or death," for it is a theology of human survival.

<sup>11</sup> Heb 11:6.

<sup>12</sup> "The sad fact about Christianity is that it never really got into the ancient spirit of India," writes a Christian theologian belonging to the ancient Syrian Christian tradition, J. B. Chethimattam, in "Giving the Reason of Our Faith," *Jeevadharma* 49 (1979): 72.

<sup>13</sup> "Theology to be authentically Asian must be immersed in our historico-cultural situation and grow out of it," declares the final statement of the Asian Theological Conference held in Sri Lanka, January 7–20, 1979, and sponsored by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. See *Jeevadharma* 49 (1979): 81. This statement only repeats what has been said time and again over the last fifty years by the majority of theologians of Asia and Africa. See H. Waldenfels, *Theologen der Dritten Welt* (München: Beck, 1962).

## 3

## THE CROSS-CULTURAL CLAIM

We have seen that theology, because of its *logos* component, cannot logically claim to be above all cultures, that is, supracultural. Each culture has its proper *logos*, and every *logos* is set within a culture. Each language is culturally bound. A possible *meta-logos* can only be a *dia-logos*, which creates a new language, a new culture, but it is not supracultural.

Because of its *theos* component, theology cannot consistently claim that it needs to belong to a superior culture, that is, be super-cultural. The Divine is Divine for all. "God makes no distinctions between people" (Ac 10:34). The notion of a private Godhead makes no sense. God in many traditions is a proper noun, but the very notion of God has a certain universal claim: God is, ultimately, a common noun. To speak meaningfully about Dante or entropy requires a superior culture. To speak about God cannot have the same cultural restrictions.

Yet, de facto, and I would argue also de jure, the theological activity has crossed cultural boundaries in the past, and is doing so presently, without necessarily having to indulge in cultural imperialism—difficult as that may sometimes be.<sup>1</sup> The cross-cultural claim is justified. Culture is the house, not the prison, of Man.

I am purposefully using variations of one single word: supra-, super-, and cross-cultural, in order to stress distinctions but not a separation. This is why I submit the following assertions.

*First*, anything human—qua human—belongs to the order of nature, and, as such, is somehow beyond culture. (I say "somehow" to avoid over-stressing the nature/culture polarity, for *logos* is also rooted in nature.) So there is a supracultural element in theology, something belonging to the human being.

*Second*, anything that is not given by nature, and is tied to a historical and datable event, is somehow different from other forms of human existence, and, as such, is somewhat above certain cultural forms, since it requires a certain degree of perfection. (The very reflexive notion of "the Divine" implies a cultural achievement.) In this sense, there is a super-cultural element in theology as a form of human perfection.

*Third*, anything that, legitimately, has not tied itself to a particular way of life and has claimed to be a message for the *chanawim*, for the poor representing the nonspecialized and not particularly cultured human beings, transcends the boundaries of one particular culture and can be called cross-cultural. In this sense, there is a cross-cultural element in theology as a human activity not tied to a particular human group.

Asking for the indulgence of "scientific" exegetes, I will interpret in a nonfinancial way a sentence of Jesus defending a woman.<sup>2</sup> On that occasion, he said, "You have the poor

<sup>1</sup> The otherwise magnificent articles on "Theologie" in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* are all inserted in the framework of Western culture.

<sup>2</sup> Here I may remind scrupulous biblicalists of St. Thomas's exegetical freedom. He says, in fact, that "omnis veritas quae, salva litterae circumstantia, potest divinae scripturae aptari, est eius sensus" (*Quaest.*

among you always" (Mk 14:7). This concern for the poor, quite paradoxically, justifies the cross-cultural value of Christian theology. The poor are precisely those who have not "made it" in any culture; they remain at the bottom rung. They are undifferentiated, not culturally specialized. They are cross-cultural, for they can be found in all cultures. The concern for *brahmans* or rabbis, scientists or saints, white people or free citizens requires certain cultural options, but the concern for the poor demands a cross-cultural attitude. "The poor are always with us," in every culture. The *cham ha-aretz*, "the people of the land," belong to agriculture, rather than human culture.

In short, what is the meaning of "cross-cultural theology"?

We have discarded the universalistic claims of Christian theology to have a value above, and therefore for, every other culture. In spite of past theological explanations, this attitude today smacks of philosophical immaturity and theological colonialism.

We have also discarded the superiority claim on, paradoxically, the same grounds on which the Christian tradition refuted Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism: it would make the understanding and acceptance of the Christic event dependent on "nature" (which we could translate "culture"), that is, on something that conditions the Christian experience *ab extra* and makes it dependent on something outside itself.

And yet, we have also acknowledged that both attitudes cannot be totally excluded from Christian self-understanding.

I am aware that the theological task does not consist in exposing private opinions, but in presenting the inherent polarity of Christian theology. Theology must be public, critical, and concerned with orthopraxis as much as with orthodoxy. In other words, Christian theologians want to be loyal both to the understanding of the Christic event as disclosed to their own experience (which is always inserted in contemporary awareness) and to the unfolding of traditional, collective self-identity. The first condition entails, besides an obvious personal honesty, an openness to and a recognition of the *novum* of our times. The second condition demands a reflective consciousness that attempts to articulate a plausible understanding of tradition that transcends private opinions, though it would not claim any extrinsic authority besides the convincing force of its own arguments. An authentic theologian does not need an *imprimatur* from the powerful, but does look for a sacramental blessing from the community. This sacrament is also the voice of the cosmos. There is no theology without cosmology.

If we want to keep the biblical image, the theologian is rather like a shepherd's dog that runs back and forth, sometimes getting ahead of the sheep and sometimes behind, barking, taking risks, making mistakes, the recipient of shouts and stones, working for a pittance—all this is part of its job of keeping the flock of the past in communion with that of the future. But a dog is loyal and asks no more.

This image mirrors our present-day situation. On the one hand, Christian theologians cannot ignore the traditional claim to universal validity: the famous or infamous *Totalität-* and *Absolutheitsanspruch*.<sup>3</sup> In one form or another, this claim is ingrained in Christian consciousness since the time of Jesus. Any authentic theology, while being a local theology limited by time and space, formulates at the same time something of the human condition that transcends local boundaries. The Christ-symbol has been constitutively linked, at least historically, with the alpha and omega of Reality.

<sup>2</sup> *disp. De potentia Dei*, q.4, a.1): "every truth that, while preserving the content of the literal meaning, can be adapted to the holy Scripture, is its meaning."

<sup>3</sup> The claims to wholeness and to absoluteness.

On the other hand, both the lessons of history and our present-day awareness make it impossible to overlook not only the dark side of such a totalitarian pretense, but also its sheer nonsense as soon as it is formulated in whatever language.<sup>4</sup> How can one *phylum* of human culture absorb or concentrate all the others?<sup>5</sup>

I am pleading for the *via media*, not for a muddled way. Explaining the past does not mean justifying it or explaining it away. It means understanding the grounds on which the past stood, and which led to formulate convictions in the way they have been transmitted to us.<sup>6</sup> This hermeneutic rule, I suggest, applies not only to theology, but also to any interpretation of the past. If we take the trouble to interpret the past, it is because we long for the comprehension of a given situation, and, from there, we want to draw a deeper understanding of our situation.

In fact, Christians, as children of their times like everybody else, did believe in the two above-mentioned positions that are no longer acceptable to us. I have elaborated ad nauseam that a new and deeper Christian self-identity may emerge if Christians give up those earlier claims and replace them with the cross-cultural validity of the Christic event. Neither exclusivism nor inclusivism is convincing any longer. *Pluralism* is the name of our third position.

This position is not the same kind of "strategic retreat" that is evident, still today, in the sad history of relations between modern science and Christian belief. It is, rather, an expression of healthy pluralism and the awareness of the relativity inherent in every human construct, act, or position, including the activities allegedly performed in alliance with the Divine.

In accordance with such a healthy pluralism, and still within a genuinely historical and "incarnational" spirit, I suggest the following cross-cultural Christian principle: *The Christic event has an inherent dynamism to incarnate wherever it can.*

<sup>4</sup> My own *theologoumena* are efforts in this same direction: the Super-Name to deal with the "no other name"; the *paris pro toto* effect to deal with the *catholica*; the *homeomorphic equivalents* to deal with the different religions: the *Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (which is not the Christ known to Christians); my defense of pluralism up to the very pluralism of truth against sheer plurality and rigid uniformity. The names of some fellow-spirits come to mind: Heiler, Rahner, Küng, Klostermaier, Cobb, Amaladoss, Chattimattam, Arnalorpavadas, Pieris, Schlette, Coward, Knitter, Rupp, D'Costa, W. C. Smith, D'Sa, Krieger.

<sup>5</sup> The modern literature on this issue is immense. I offer only a selected bibliography of mainly collected works that indicate contemporary trends: Otto Karrer, *Das Religiöse in der Menschheit und das Christentum* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1936), a pioneer work; Owen C. Thomas, *Attitudes toward Other Religions* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986); Donald G. Dawe and John B. Carman, *Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978); Nihal Abeyasingha, *A Theological Evaluation of Non-Christian Rites* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1979); Thomas Emprayil, *The Emerging Theology of Religions* (Vicentian Ashram Rewa: Vicentian Publications, 1980); Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985); Harold Coward, *Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985); John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987); Leonard Swidler, *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987); M. M. Thomas, *Risking Christ for Christ's Sake* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> One may be ready to accept the monarchic principle and the ecclesiastical "theocracy" of Dante's *De Monarchia* and Soloviev's *La Russie et l'Église universelle* provided that one sets these two brilliant essays within their respective contexts and recognizes that the situation today has radically changed. This mutation is what makes Teilhard de Chardin susceptible of a reductionistic interpretation, as if the future of humankind had to follow one single line of development.

The verb "can" is ambiguous, ambivalent, and not apodictic.

It is *ambiguous* because it may lead in various directions, good and bad. It may lead to impositions, conquests, and exploitations as well as to fulfillment, enhancement of life, and true conversion. It is *ambivalent* because it may have opposite results—it may pacify, purify, and perfect a culture, on the one hand, or harden, blind, and even change that culture into a fanatic one, on the other. It is *not apodictic* because the incarnational impulse cannot have any justification a priori.<sup>7</sup> We become aware of this impulse insofar as we experience the Christic event to be connected with the destiny of the human race and with the very dynamism of Being. We are both actors in and spectators of the display of Reality. Not only the destiny of the Earth, but also the very life of the universe is something of which we share the glory, the burden, and the responsibility.

We could play with the metaphor of incarnation further and point out that it can take place only in a virgin's womb, in a poor milieu, and in a marginal culture, accompanied by astrological events. But there is no need to be allegorical. The theological incarnation is de facto not possible everywhere because the Christian self-understanding in different times and spaces requires, in each instance, different conditions of possibility. Sometimes these conditions may not be present.

The same principle can be stated in a more positive light. It is the incarnational dynamism of the Christic event itself, reenacted by its believers, that carries out such acts of inculcation. This is a delicate activity, and Christians should be extremely careful not to repeat the cultural genocides of the past that resulted from their alliance with one particular culture.<sup>8</sup> There is always the danger that the Christian dynamism can degenerate into a trick to gain power, or increase numbers, or find "followers."

It becomes clear, therefore, that the incarnational enterprise evinces the previously mentioned ambiguity and ambivalence; it can become unethical and, I would add, un-Christian. The internal dynamism I am speaking about, which incidentally is not exclusive to the Christic event, can be related to the principle that goodness spreads by itself (*bonum diffusivum sui*), so that any strategy or device to "make it work," or even to "bear witness" to it, makes it spurious and harmful. This was, incidentally, the advice of Mahatma Gandhi to Christians: to attract by the perfume of their virtues.<sup>9</sup>

What I am saying is that there is a spontaneous fecundation among cultures, a positive osmosis among beliefs, a cross-cultural enrichment that does not need to be

<sup>7</sup> See the doctoral dissertation by Donald Alexander, *Incarnation: A Model for Cross-cultural Communication. A Study in Religious Methodology*, Interdisciplinary Doctoral Committee in Humanities, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1974.

<sup>8</sup> Any sociology or ethnology student will recall the controversies regarding "acculturation," "inculturation," "cultural change," "transculturation," and the like. For a summary introduction we may refer to the corresponding articles in the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, 1968, and *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, 1985. Theological journals today are full of articles dealing with this problem. See also Donald J. Elwood, *What Asian Christians Are Thinking* (Quezon City: New Day, 1976); Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, "Third World Theologies," *Mission Trends* 3 (1976), and "Faith Meets Faith," *Mission Trends* 5 (1981); Hans Waldenfels, *Theologen der Dritten Welt*, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> "If I want to hand a rose to you, there is a definite movement. But if I want to transmit its scent, I do so without any movement. The rose transmits its own scent without a movement. . . . If we have spiritual truth, it will transmit itself. You talk of the joy of a spiritual experience and say you cannot but share it. Well, if it is a real joy, boundless joy, it will spread itself without the vehicle of speech. In spiritual matters, we have merely to step out of the way. Let God work His way. If we interfere, we may do harm. Good is a self-acting force," *Young India*, January 19, 1928. This topic was recurrent in Gandhi.

an invasion of foreign goods, ideas, or people for the sake of profits, either material or spiritual.

There is no blueprint for such a dynamism. It cannot be realized as an act of the conscious and external will (in order to gain some form of good). It has to emerge as a natural and spontaneous movement from an internal urge of the people concerned. An example of what I am talking about is the emerging Indic theology.<sup>10</sup> This theology is sprouting out of a double fidelity: to the religious traditions of the country, and to Christian beliefs. Theologians are trying to harmonize the two traditions in which they live and believe. We are here at the antipodes of the "apologetics" attitude and even of the "mission" mentality—though I recognize that these terms are undergoing deep changes in meaning.

This implies a different interpretation of the classic text with which "missions" traditionally have been justified: "Go and teach all nations" (Mt 28:19). There have been abusive interpretations of this text, which conclude—from this injunction to teach—the right to teach anything and to open schools. There are also the more subtle hermeneutic interpretations of modern exegetes. My reading is more radical. It uncovers an untheological "extrapolation" and an unconscious extrapolation of the meaning of the text.

The *extrapolation* is clear. Christians found in those texts a "Roman Empire" mentality: *urbi et orbi, pax romana*, one civilization, and all the modern dreams of the same order, often with nice-sounding words, such as "one democracy," "world government," or "world Church." The "all nations" in Matthew's text could not mean modern Australia, just as the "darkness over the earth" at the death of Christ (Mt 27:45) did not refer to that continent either, nor did the "idols" of St. Paul refer to the *mūrtis* of Hindū worship. I wonder if the "little flock" and the "one flock, one shepherd" could ever have meant an organization of one billion people with a monarch on the top. Such an interpretation has projected into Jesus the mentality of a Roman lawyer or a statesman creating an assembly (Church) or founding a dynasty. It was the destiny of Christian history to interpret this text in this way. It is a legitimate interpretation. But unless we identify the Christic event with history, it is not the only possible Christian reading.

<sup>10</sup> See Kaj Baago, *A Bibliography: Library of Indian Christian Theology* (Madras: CLS, 1969), which contains literature since 1600 in European and vernacular languages; R. H. S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (Madras: CLS, 1969), which offers a primarily Protestant perspective. The following texts are mainly from a Roman Catholic perspective: J. Pathrapankal, *Service and Salvation* (Bangalore: TPI, 1973) (a collection of papers from the Nagpur Theological Conference on Evangelization. The editing committee, not the publisher, decided to modify some substantial points of the final conclusions of the conference in order to take eight more "prudent" positions with regard to the Vatican authorities); J. Vempeny, *Inspiration in the Non-Biblical Scriptures* (Bangalore: TPI, 1983), in which the author argues "that the non-Biblical scriptures are analogically, yet truly, inspired by God" (xxi); D. S. Amalorpavadas, *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures* (Bangalore: NBGLC, n.d.), a collection of papers from the seminar on this topic in 1974, in which for the first time mainly Catholic theologians dared to pose the long burning questions concerning the relationship of the Bible and other sacred Scriptures; at that time, it seemed daring to call other Scriptures "sacred"; Michel Amaladoss et al., *Theologizing in India* (Bangalore: TPI, 1981), the proceedings of a seminar held in Poona in 1978; P. Puthanangady, *Toward an Indian Theology of Liberation* (Bangalore: Indian Theological Association, 1981), which collects the papers of the annual meeting of the association, in which the Latin American liberation theology is defended but considered inadequate for the Indian situation; Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), an impassioned plea for the "religiousness of the poor" across religious frontiers.

The *intrapolation* is even more interesting. Even assuming that Jesus Christ had the intention of establishing a world Church as some dream of, the text would not have more authority than when he said that he would not go beyond the borders of Israel,<sup>11</sup> or when he commanded that we should live without money.<sup>12</sup> He might have dreamed of a world without money as some dream of a world Church. Both are dreams—with the basic difference that one is a powerful utopia, and the other a dreadful nightmare.

In other words, today neither the interpretations envisioning *Christendom* nor those extolling *Christianity* are convincing any longer. We need a vision of *Christianess*.<sup>13</sup>

To sum up, the cross-cultural value of the Christian event cannot be defended a priori as belonging to its very nature. Yet there is an existential *nexus*,<sup>14</sup> a dynamism, that urges Christians to formulate their truths in universal terms—whether they call such truth “revelation” or simply “Christ.”

This urge belongs to the very movement of history. But it is not unique nor can it claim to special privileges; it is subject to all the constraints of history that we have described. The future of Christian history will show whether this effort at incarnation follows the pattern of the Grand Inquisitor or the spirit of Bethlehem, under the witness of the skies, with the hospitality of animals, the astonishment of the shepherds, and the bewilderment of the Magi. Without this mystic core, the entire Christic event degenerates into a masochistic complacency in being humble, or a sadistic drive to show the “power of the Cross.”

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From all these considerations, we can draw a threefold conclusion.

a. Christian theology is translatable only inasmuch as Christian theologians succeed in making those translations. It is not universally translatable in principle. The drive to translate belongs to the dynamism of history. Translation is not a neutral or easy human activity. If, in past times, translations were made in order to convert others, the irony of history now shows that good translations demand just the opposite: the conversion of the translator. You cannot immerse yourself in the universe of discourse of the other if you do not sincerely partake in the universe of life of the other culture, that is, if you do not make the foreign culture your own. I do not need to stress that I speak of real translations and not of transliterations.

b. Christian translations work both ways. They are introduced as foreign bodies into other cultures, and then, slowly, they are assimilated and transformed from within those cultures. This transformation is not necessarily only that of the guest cultures; it can also stimulate the host culture to develop in its own ways. An Indic theology of the Gospels, for example, may not result in attracting Hindus to Christianity, but it may contribute to strengthening, enhancing, and transforming Hindu beliefs—which is what the adjective “Christian” should mean.

On the other hand, Christian translations also modify the original tradition in an often unforeseeable way. For example, if we were to translate *agapē* with *karuṇā*, *psychē* with *ātman*, *Christos* with *abbiṣeka*, *logos* with *dao*, *theos* with *allah*, . . . the Christian theology would itself undergo a transformation. Each new term or image not only connotes a different universe

<sup>11</sup> See Mt 15:24.

<sup>12</sup> See Mt 10:9.

<sup>13</sup> See my “The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges,” in John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 89–116. Now in Vol. III of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>14</sup> “Effort.”

of discourse; it also opens up the sluices for the living waters of the other culture. Once you introduce the notion of *dharma* into the West, for instance, you can no longer separate ethics from religion, nor can you reduce religion to doctrines. One might reply that Christians do not need Hindus and Buddhists to be aware of such dangers; still, without such Eastern input, Christians would not have the reminder that the fragmentation of knowledge leads to the fragmentation of the knower.

In a word, the translation of a *text* requires the introduction of an entire *context*. The mingling of contexts is what brings about strife and fecundation.

c. The double effect of translation is not limited to Christian theology, but has homeomorphic equivalents in other cultures. In this regard, Christian theology has no privileged position. A similar dynamism is detectable in many other cultures. Zen, for instance, is linked—and yet not limited—to Buddhism.

The fact that the Christian tradition shares the same transcultural limits and promises with other religions in no way diminishes Christian life and self-understanding. Each culture and religion, like each individual being, is unique.

## SECTION XX

### PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY: AN OUTDATED DISTINCTION

#### Notes for Discussion\*

A few years ago, the Indian Philosophical Congress, to which many of the "official" promoters of philosophy in India belong, asked its members this question: "Is Indian philosophy in need of a new orientation?"<sup>1</sup> The discussion that took place on this occasion and the essays that were written, both before and after the congress, were a clear indication of the current trends in Indian philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, I believe that this problem of the need for a new orientation has deeper roots.

The question regarding the new orientation of philosophy is truly of great importance.<sup>3</sup> It involves, however, an even more fundamental issue, namely, the very concept of philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

\* "Philosophy and Theology: An Outdated Distinction. Notes for Discussion," in G. Ferretti (ed.), *Filosofia e teologia nel futuro dell'Europa. Atti del quinto colloquio su filosofia e religione*, Macerata, 24–27 ottobre 1990 (Genova: Marietti, 1992), 185–96. Review of a previous article: "Philosophy and Theology, Reason and Faith," in T. R. V. Murti (ed.), *The Concept of Philosophy* (Varanasi: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University, 1968), 59–63.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the XXXI Indian Philosophical Congress* (Annamalainagar, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the articles from the journal *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 1955ff.; S. Radhakrishnan and J. H. Muirhead (ed.), *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (London, 1952); K. C. Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1958), S. N. Dasgupta, *Philosophical Essays* (Calcutta, 1941); M. Hiriyanna, *Indian Philosophical Studies* (Mysore, 1957); R. D. Ranade, *A Constructive Survey of the Upanishadic Philosophy* (Poona, 1926); M. Hiriyanna, *The Quest after Perfection* (Mysore, 1952); S. C. Chatterjee, *The Problem of Philosophy* (1949); S. C. Chatterjee and O. M. Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Calcutta, 1948); S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London, 1927); M. N. Sircar, *The System of Vedantic Thought and Culture* (Calcutta, 1927); etc.

<sup>3</sup> For a review of the contemporary orientations of philosophy in the Indian subcontinent, see C. T. K. Chari, "Philosophy in India," *Religion and Society* 7, no. 3–4 (1960): 106–14; and R. De Smet, "L'activité philosophique au Pakistan," *Archives de Philosophie* 23, no. 3 (1960): 403–53.

<sup>4</sup> As well as the bibliography cited elsewhere, see also W. Jaeger, *Die Theologie der fruhen griechischen Denker* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1953) (a revised version of the original Gifford Lectures paper printed in Oxford in 1947); E. Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* (Gifford Lectures,

There are two different conceptions of philosophy. Indian philosophy is the custodian of one of these. The other is the "modern" concept of philosophy that is predominant in the West.<sup>5</sup> From a Scholastic point of view we could say that in India philosophy is defined by its material object—knowledge, that is, reality, and its main purpose consists in learning and, in one way or another, becoming this reality. "Modern" philosophy, on the other hand, is defined by its formal object, that is, the rational or, more precisely, intellectual knowledge of ultimate reality. The intellectual effort tends, in this latter case, toward the acquisition of ultimate knowledge, that is, a critical knowledge that in some way authenticates itself.<sup>6</sup> Indian philosophy strives to decipher the mystery of being because this involves us ontically. "Modern" philosophy, for its part, must maintain a critical attitude in order to carefully examine the presuppositions upon which this type of knowledge may truly be founded.

Often the divergence is felt so acutely as to prompt many Indian scholars to sustain that Indic wisdom (the Vedanta, for example) is neither science nor philosophy, neither theology nor even religion, but another type of knowledge, which is, in fact, supreme. Yet in doing this they are honoring the "modern Western" mentality (which, after all, no longer belongs exclusively to the modern-day West). These scholars regard science as synonymous with natural science, equate "philosophy" with rational inquiry (if not actually dialectics), consider theology as pure exegesis (*Mimamsa*) and mere dogmatism, and religion as no more than a collection of ceremonies. Others, meanwhile, would filter (so to speak) out of Indic philosophy the philosophical precipitate capable of competing with "modern" (Western) philosophy.

The process of discrimination between these two philosophical conceptions is basically due to the distinction between reason and faith. Faith (and faith only) saves, while reason may assume two different positions in relation to faith. On one hand, reason can help faith by providing it with a supporting structure from below, and in this case it is welcomed and its contribution in embracing faith is what the Christian tradition calls theology. On the other hand, however, reason can also place itself in the path of faith and hinder its work when it claims to be the one supreme value in the quest for truth.

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1901, 1902), 2 vols. (Glasgow; J. MacLehose, 1904); L. Lievielle, *De l'Acte* (Paris: Aubier, 1946); Ed. Morotsir, *La pensée négative* (Paris: Aubier, 1947); J. LeClercq, *L'amtour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1957); M.D. Chenu, *La Théologie comme science au XIII siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957); M.D. Chenu, *La Technologie au douzième siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957) (Italian translation: *La teologia nel XII secolo* [Milano: Jaca Book, 1986]); G. Misch, *The Dawn of Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950) (extended edition of *Der Weg in die Philosophie*, 1926); Th. Soiron, *Heilige Theologie* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1935); H. M. Christmann, *Lebendige Einheit* (Salzburg: Müller, 1938); M. Heidegger, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* (Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1954); H. Andra, *Wunderbare Wirklichkeit (Majestät des Seins)* (Salzburg: Müller, 1938); R. Guardini, *The End of the Modern World* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1957) (translated from *Das Ende der neuen Zeit*); R. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza* (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1951); R. Panikkar, *F. H. Jacobi y la filosofía del sentimiento* (Buenos Aires: Sapientia, 1948).

<sup>5</sup> Where the meaning of the word philosophy is not made explicit by the adjective that accompanies it I have placed it in quote marks ("philosophy") to denote the Western technical concept of philosophy as *opus rationis*.

<sup>6</sup> For additional bibliographic references, see Cl. Tresmontant, *Etudes de métaphysique biblique* (Paris: Gabalda, 1955); Tresmontant, *Essai sur la Pensée hébraïque* (Paris: Cerf, 1953); Tresmontant, *La métaphysique du Christianisme et la naissance de la Philosophie chrétienne* (Paris: Seuil, 1961); R. Rousselot, *L'intellectualisme de St. Thomas Aquinas* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1924); J. Marachal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, 5 vols. (Louvain, 1926ff.); P. V. Aja, *El Cristianismo en la crisis de Occidente (y otros temas)* (La Habana: Sociedad Cubana de Philosophy, 1953); V. Fatone, *El Hombre y Dios* (Buenos Aires: Columba, 1955).

Indic philosophy also recognizes a certain distinction between reason and faith—this is the distinction between two modes of knowledge, such as that which exists, for example, between deduction and intuition. Both forms of knowledge are necessary for an integral philosophy. This is the reason why Indic philosophy is essentially religious and theological, a fact that constitutes both its greatness and its weakness at the same time.

Christian faith, on the other hand, is very different. It is not only a form of knowledge; it is a real and free gift of God and belongs to a different order than that which is purely intellectual. This faith is not denied to philosophers, but it is given first and foremost to the poor and to children. It is the beginning of Man's deification—although one of its first effects is, in fact, a higher illumination of our mind. It is not contrary to reason, and yet, at the same time, it cannot be said to be the pure prolongation of "philosophy" because, once faith is accepted by Man, purely rational philosophy loses its salvific character. In Christianity, in fact, it is not "philosophy" that saves, but faith. "Philosophy" is thus deprived of its religious function and relegated to a purely rational sphere. Natural and supernatural are now placed on two planes that are distinct but not separate, which leads to a certain antinomy in their spheres of action. The conflict between reason and faith is therefore a phenomenon that arises within the context of Christianity itself.

Christian faith, nevertheless, could not (and cannot) live for long "suspended in air," so to speak, nor could it completely supplant philosophy. It had to face the challenge of "philosophy," and the result of this encounter, which developed into a specific type of philosophy, was called precisely (Christian) theology. The mutual challenge of reason and faith is found throughout the whole historical process of European thought, from the Patristic period to the modern day. The ancient concept of philosophy as wisdom that leads to salvation, as the intellectual dimension of religion, is no more, and two typically Western products have taken its place: theology and philosophy.

Theology, in the modern sense of the word, succeeds the integral and indiscriminate philosophy of the previous period, but with one basic difference: while it continues to be the science of salvation and the knowledge of the ultimate reality, it does not in itself have a salvific character. Theology is the work of the believing intellect, but theological knowledge is not necessary for achieving salvation. On the other hand, pure philosophy is also split from religion and is regarded as a new type of human research, which, by operating with the means provided by reason, is inclined toward the discovery of the ultimate meaning of being. Its specific task is the analysis of our cognitive powers. To the "believer," philosophy is the necessary tool of theology; to the "nonbeliever" it is the highest possible wisdom from a rational point of view. We have, therefore, three different "objects": religion as an essential factor of human existence, theology as ultimate wisdom in the light of the self-revelation of God, and last, philosophy as the "natural" and intellectual search for the meaning of reality—a search that starts from the analysis of our means of knowledge.

Now, this triple distinction, which is fundamental to the West, does not exist in the same way in Indic tradition. Indic philosophy, in fact, embraces all three of these levels and is religion, theology, and philosophy at the same time. The religion of the followers of the Vedanta, for example, is also their philosophy and they are therefore led to consider their *darsana* as a religion, a way of life and of salvation. For these any discussion on the level of pure "philosophical" technique, in the Western sense, would be impossible or even blasphemous.

First of all, therefore, we encounter Indic philosophy as religion—though when I say "religion" I am referring not merely to a set of religious practices but a path to realization and salvation. It is not that Indic philosophy is a substitution for religion (this is a danger

only for pure intellectuals) but it is in itself religion. This explains why Indic philosophy often takes on apologetic forms in discussions with Western philosophy. Indic philosophy claims to possess salvific power and to be the intellectual dimension of religion, and it is at this global level that it meets the assertions of the Christian religion.

Ensuingly, there is the possibility of an encounter between Indic philosophy, considered as theology, and Christian theology. This encounter is of great importance: the convergence of two disciplines is possible because they both pursue the same goal and deal with the same material object. Both strive, in fact, to be more than pure speculation and aspire to be considered as the science of salvation and ultimate, integral wisdom. The main problem, nevertheless, lies in the clarification of the two concepts of faith. Yet since faith can never be proved, much less imposed, any dialogue initiated on the basis of a purely "philosophical" encounter will quickly run dry or deteriorate. In actual fact, so far Indic philosophy has not been able to establish a concrete encounter with Christian theology and has rarely succeeded in making contact with believing philosophers of the West. Dialogue, in fact, has mainly been with the independent "philosophy" of Europe and America, which explains many of the reactions occurring on both sides.

This brings us to the third stage: the encounter between the various "philosophies," according to the meaning that has been conferred on them by "modern" Western philosophical speculation. The dialogue, in this case, covers an indefinite number of subjects, except one, which to Indic philosophy is the most important of all, while to pure "philosophy" it simply does not exist: the suprarational approach to the ultimate problem. It might be that this dialogue leads to what Kant called the "destruction of reason," the recognition, that is, of the inadequacy of pure reason and pure "philosophy," though I doubt that the second part of the Kantian intent—"in order to make way for faith"—can be realized.

What I have said here may in itself be a partial explanation of the title of these notes. Indic philosophy has a profound need for a new orientation and is experiencing a healthy restlessness, arising not only from its innate dynamism and vitality but also from the fact that it is now beginning to feel the effects of its contact with Christian problematics, albeit in a still weak and indirect way.

Certainly, the differences are still great, and from a philosophical point of view it is to be hoped that Indic philosophy does not yield too easily to Western criticism. It should not be content with becoming a mere "philosophy," nor should it be inactive and limit itself to merely reflecting on its own past.

A comparison of a phenomenological nature may be needed for further clarification if we do not want to lose sight of the more profound divergences. The following chapter is an attempt in this respect.

## 1

## PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY— REASON AND FAITH

I—By *philosophy* we mean the human quest for the ultimate reality—or, if we prefer to place a little more emphasis on the intellectual aspect, the human quest for the knowledge of the ultimate truth.

II—*Theology* has the same formal meaning as that described above for philosophy.

III—For as long as man has searched for the true or ultimate reality with all his being, without a critical (i.e., reflexive) awareness of the anthropological implications of his enquiry, no discrimination was made between philosophy and theology, except perhaps for a slight *essential* emphasis on philosophy—what reality *is* (so I can reach it)—and a slight *existential* stress on the role of theology—how to reach reality (since in order to reach it I must first know it).

IV—The distinctive feature of what in “modern” times is called philosophy is the assumption that truth is given openly to human *reason* and hence that Man must *discover* and *see* this ultimate truth. Philosophy speaks of evidence, intuition, and the like—all metaphors of the eye.

V—What characterizes that which was to become known as theology is the assumption that this ultimate reality is given openly to Man, whose receiving organ for it is *faith*, and hence that Man must *accept* and *hear* that reality. Theology speaks of following (a call), hearing, and so on—all metaphors of the ear.

VI—When we approach the knowledge of the ultimate reality by means of reason, we have “philosophy”; when we do so by way of faith, we have theology. No presupposition is made in either case about the nature of reality or the contents of truth.

VII—*Reason* is understood as the intellectual power of human *evidence*; it is the noble human capacity to *see* things as they appear to the human mind. We cannot, however, step away from our own shadow. In other words, our reason’s horizon of visibility coincides with its limits. We cannot properly *see* (i.e., have rational evidence) beyond the ontological field of our reason itself. The reality that we see with our reason or the truth we discover through it can only be *rational* reality (or truth), or rather, the rational aspect of reality (or truth). To be sure, by our reason we may come to *know* that reality transcends us and that it may well be truth beyond reason (we may, in fact, be reasonably aware that there are many things beyond reason), but we cannot *see*, that is, understand rationally, this transcendence. If philosophy claims to be the highest knowledge of reality it must either absolutize and divinize reason or transcend it. The former case leads to idealistic philosophy, the latter to philosophical theology.

VIII—*Faith* is used by theology as a source of a higher form of knowledge, the less inadequate *human* knowledge regarding the absolute (or ultimate) reality, while we remain here on earth theologizing (i.e., philosophizing). Faith is not based on our intrinsic rational seeing-power (evidence). We could perhaps use the metaphor of intrinsic *bearing* (acceptance, grasping). Faith might be compared to a kind of extrinsic evidence of hearsay, not of seeing, grounded not on man, but already in some way founded on the other shore. If the ultimate reality transcends us it cannot be scrutinized by our eyes; however, if we must connect it in some way with us, we could use the auditory metaphor and say that the absolute may be somehow audible. Reason would be the inner eye: it can see perhaps clearer than any other means of knowledge, but it does not reach very far. Faith would be the inner ear: it can hear perhaps not as clearly as the eye can see, but its grasp of reality reaches far beyond. We should not, nevertheless, abuse any metaphor.

IX—*Faith* and *reason* make room for two different forms of knowledge. The latter presupposes that we are open to reality (we discover), the former that reality is open to us (we listen).

Reason is given to every normal human being to a lesser or greater degree. Faith is also given to various degrees (we believe in the words of our parents, teachers, friends—in God even, if we are able to hear his word). Reason and faith, nevertheless, are not on the same level; they are two different light-intensities of our human knowledge, as it were, rather than two different independent human faculties. They are neither antagonistic nor supplementary, but complementary. This relationship of complementarity is, however, a particular kind of relationship:

a. Reason cannot exist or operate without a certain amount of faith. To begin with, it must have faith in reason itself, as an organ of truth; it needs faith to accept the evidence of what it sees (since human evidence is never complete). Totally perfect evidence would presuppose an absolute knowledge of the known truth and *all* its implications, which is not possible for a limited mind. Any act of reason is founded on presuppositions that have not been rationally investigated. It is in this sense that reason always presupposes the *acceptance* of something. This acceptance comes not by means of reason but through a certain confidence in the very structure of our mind, which morphologically corresponds to what we have called faith.<sup>1</sup>

b. Faith cannot do without reason: it may not *see* the internal evidence of the spoken words or the cogent necessity of the accepted truth, but it must somehow *see* (have evidence of) the speaker, understand the meaning of his words, and be convinced of the noncontradictoriness of what is accepted. I cannot have faith in my parents, in God, or in reason if I do not even know that they are my parents, or that there is a God, or that I have reason. And yet faith can be in me without my being aware of it.

Moreover, the relation between faith and reason is so close that it is given in one and the same act. By the very act of obeying my parents, because I believe in their words, I realize that they are my parents; and because I discover them as my parents, their words have a special

<sup>1</sup> Even the famous argument that in order to deny the "evidence" of the first principles one has to apply the very principles themselves needs a certain act of faith to break the vicious circle. In fact, just because we cannot disprove them it does not mean that they are "proved." If we cannot disprove any such principles for the fact that they are already presupposed by the counterargument, unless we have a degree of faith in the mechanism of the mind the only strictly rational consequence would be complete silence and unformulated agnosticism.

weight (authority) for me. Rational evidence produces conviction, but conviction also leads to rational evidence. And this conviction is the acceptance of something because it is *given* (in some sense *heard*, not *seen*). It is not a vicious, but a vital circle.

X—There is no "philosophy" without a degree of faith; there is no theology without reason. "Philosophy" has faith in reason; theology finds reason in faith; it must use reason to deal with faith.

There is but one essential difference: the faith presupposed in "philosophy" is not properly theological faith, whereas the reason presupposed in theology is philosophical reason. "Philosophy" has a certain priority, while theology is ultimate. "Philosophy" has a certain consistency of its own; it is based on human reason, but its claim of being the ultimate instance can only subsist if faith and therefore theology do not exist. Theology is nothing without philosophy, on whose collaboration and service it depends. And yet it goes further than philosophy: it is ultimate; in a sense, it is the "in-formation," the enrichment and transformation of rational philosophy into suprarational or plainly theological philosophy—again, supposing that faith is not an empty word.

Theology is not grounded on dogmas, but on faith. Yet faith requires reason and in some sense is founded on reason. Theology discovers and formulates dogmas as philosophy discovers and formulates metaphysical (or in some way universally valid) principles.

#### XI—Properly speaking, philosophy and theology go hand in hand.

The task of discrimination, which was begun in the West by the Greeks, developed by medieval Scholasticism, and completed in "modern" philosophy, was somehow necessary in order to stratify the various layers of knowledge and their own realms. Today, however, we have the possibility of integrating (while taking care not to confuse them) the different strata of human knowledge in a more mature and comprehensive theological philosophy or philosophical theology.

#### XII—Summing up our terminological clarification, we could say:

1. Reason is the power of the human intellect that discovers truth on the basis of evidence.
2. Faith is the light of the human being that accepts truth on the basis of a qualified testimony.
3. The functioning of the human intellect presupposes reason as well as faith.
4. Philosophy is the conception of reality based on reason.
5. Theology is the conception of reality based on faith.
6. Pure philosophy or pure theology, in the sense of a total exclusion of another's form of knowledge, is not possible. Both are necessarily complementary.
7. When reason leads and controls faith we are philosophizing.
8. When faith leads and controls reason we are theologizing.
9. There is a kind of faith whose nature requires direction and control by reason. This is the stronghold of philosophy.
10. There is said to exist a type of faith whose nature requires direction and control over reason. This is the realm of theology.
11. As a matter of language, *that* which some cultures have called "philosophy" corresponds to *what* we have considered here as theology.
12. Our thesis is that:

- a. while, through its critical awareness, modern Western speculation has clarified the concept of "philosophy," it has also impoverished it by reducing it to a concept of rational philosophy, and
- b. the possible contribution of Indic philosophy could very well be the reinstatement of the concept of philosophy as theology, without denying, however, the justified existence of rational philosophical science.

## CONTEMPORARY OVERCOMING

I. If Western modernity can be described as awareness of the need for a critique of reason, the postmodern situation requires a critique of the critique (of reason).

II. If we are to avoid falling into a *regressus in infinitum*, this second critique cannot be the same as the first. It is therefore not a question of destroying the "dogmatism" of reason, but of overcoming the "dogmatism" of the critique itself. An example of this attitude would be the metanoetics of Hajime Tanabe of the Kyoto School.<sup>1</sup>

III. Be this as it may, I would like merely to place the problem within the context of so-called theology and so-called philosophy.

IV. From the point of view of contemporary Christian theology, taking, on the one hand, the reflections of the controversial "Christian philosophy" and, on the other, the enormous impact of contemporary thought, we might conclude as follows:

1. A theology conceived as pure hermeneutics, both of the word of God (however we may understand it), and the documents of the Church (or Churches) or of tradition, has lost its credibility because we have become too aware of the fact that every type of hermeneutics has presuppositions, and therefore that there are no neutral interpretations.
2. Theology cannot forbid either philosophy or science from analyzing and criticizing both its assertions and its foundations. It has no authority—either moral or political, or even theological, to suggest what should be the duty of human thought. And so we discover the *mythos* on which theology is based.
3. Due to the influence of modern thought, contemporary theology itself has turned virtually all the foundations of the theology of recent centuries into problems: God, the word of God, faith as knowledge that is separate and separable from rationality—in short, the interpretation of all the dogmas (assumption, resurrection, incarnation, hell, and so on). The *Ummythologisierung*, the new exegesis, psychoanalytic, scientific, or other interpretations—thanks to these, all theories regarding the separation between the natural and the supernatural, and regarding faith as a superior and independent cognitive form, are no longer sustainable.

V. Philosophy, on the other hand, has largely abandoned rationalism and a purely "natural" conception of human knowledge. Contemporary philosophy is shrouded in a sense of mystery and is again seeking to be wisdom. Here we might say:

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<sup>1</sup> H. Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

1. The separation between subject and object proves to be unsustainable as a starting point for philosophical knowledge.
2. Epistemology, phenomenology, and also hermeneutics are aware of their incompleteness. Reason is increasingly becoming not a guide for life but a safeguard against disorder and error.
3. An open philosophy does not exclude any form of approach to truth or reality, as long as it does not present itself as dogmatic and is willing to accept criticism. Philosophy is *opus rationis* only when *ratio* is not limited to its measuring function.

VI. Both philosophy and theology aim to represent an integral and critical human effort to make sense of reality. The dichotomy between philosophy and theology as separate sciences is now no more. There are no grounds for any theological apartheid. There are obviously different philosophies. Pluralism is constitutively part of human—and philosophical—contingency.

## SECTION XXI

### MAN, THE MEDIEVAL BEING\*

\* \* \*

#### 1

### MAN: THE "MIDDLE AGE"

#### Theocentrism of a Historic God

"Man, the Medieval Being" is the cryptic title of this essay. A useful piece of advice, at least for me, from a pedagogical point of view, consists in announcing what one wishes to say, saying it, and afterward, saying what has been said—and this is what I will try to do.

First of all, I would like to pay tribute to three medievalist publications, with an added commentary. In 1957, the Italian Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei held a conference on "Oriente e Occidente nel Medioevo" (East and West during the Middle Ages). The proceedings of the third Congress of Medieval Philosophy in 1964 focused on "natural philosophy in the Middle Ages." The fifth Congress, held in 1972, studied the general theme of the "meeting of cultures in medieval philosophy."

This is my commentary: although the anthropological theme was not the one being directly dealt with, there is anyway a surprising absence of what these days would be known as anthropological reflection. Nature is here, cultures are also objects of observation, and the other topic is the East and West. It seems that medieval Man has nothing to say about himself.

*Man: the Middle Age.* Modern Man, despite his conquest of matter and space, atrophied his own self-consciousness. Man represents the "Middle Age" between the transtemporal divine Mystery and the material Cosmos, whose age is practically undefined.

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\* "Man: The Medieval Being," a reviewed versió, *Actes del simposi internacional de filosofia de l'edat mitjana*, Vic-Girona, 11–16 d'abril de 1993 (Vic: Patronat d'Estudis Osonencs, 1996), 51–62. Translated from Catalan by Carla Ros.

*Medieval anthropological thought* also means a conception of Man as the Middle Age. Hence the Middle Ages take on a symbolism that overcomes the limits of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim milieus.

Or perhaps, they do not? Perhaps in those very milieus there was an idea of Man precisely as an intermediate between heaven and earth. This fits in with a conception present in all cultures, from the Chinese to the Indians, including the Africans.

To speak of Man as the "Middle Age" and of the Man of the Middle Ages provides a very special relation for a symbolic thought—certainly not for a purely rationalist thought (if that is the appropriate word).

In the three great monotheistic religions that shaped the European-Mediterranean Middle Ages, Man has enjoyed a certainly intermediate but peculiar state. One only has to make the comparison with other Asian cultures, for instance, in which the Divine plays a different role, not so centered on Man. The monotheistic God is a historic God.

In our Middle Ages, on one hand, the *status* of the human being has practically been considered as a secondary one. The one important thing is God: He must be praised. The Renaissance would feel scandalized by medieval theocentrism, which seemed to utterly deny human dignity.

Yet, on the other hand, Man's guardian, his support and his defense, He who gives him consistence and dignity, is none other than God himself. It is not angels or private Gods that take care of Man. It is God himself who, by choosing a people—a human people—dignifies the entire human race (as Judaism would have it); it is God who, by incarnating, raises the human being to Divinity, or calls him to divinization (as Christianity would say); it is God himself who, by sending the "seal of the prophets"<sup>1</sup>, again shows that Man is the apple of his Creator's eye (as in Islam). In brief, if it is true that Man sways to and fro over nothingness, and he is made of darkness, of non-being, and is even sinful, but God himself embarks on the human adventure and takes it as His own. If we take a look at the history of these three (though without neglecting other) traditions—which so often scandalize us, and rightly so—we will however see that human history is also the place of the *gesta Dei*, of God's deeds. This is the strength and weakness of monotheisms, which have to balance the a-cosmism of a transcendent God and His interference in human history.

### The Age Linking Us to Antiquity and Modernity

In sum, Man, in this "medieval" vision as a whole, is both temporal and eternal, nothingness and totality, at loss in the immensity of creation and its king, an angel and a demon. Yet Man as the Middle Age means something more. It means that in our civilization he occupies an intermediate place between what is known as antiquity and modernity. And this place also gives him a role. The Middle Ages provide us with an unavoidable insight into ancient and modern times alike. Antiquity has definitively been tinted by medieval interpretation. However much we wish to go back to ancient times—which is what the Renaissance claimed to—we cannot totally remove our medieval "spectacles"; even if we take them off, there is a mark left on our faces.

The Middle Ages' influence over modernity is far greater. One only has to take into account the impact of modernity on non-Western cultures having no knowledge of the Middle Ages. One could say, without exaggeration, that we are dealing with another kind of modernity. The intercultural and political consequences are of highest magnitude. An obvious example,

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad.

at a macro-sociological level, is India. And it could be that the difference between North America and the other Americas in fact consists in that the former, in contrast to Central and South America, did not directly receive the influence of medieval culture, still very much alive in the Spanish Empire at the time of Columbus.

In such contemporary situations, which are not yet totally "modern," the Middle Ages' contribution becomes evident. If we do not wish to slip into a kind of cultural schizophrenia, the study of the Middle Ages again becomes an imperative for the identity of Western culture—and not a luxury for a few specialists or enthusiasts.

And this is what I would like to deal with.

## 2

### MAN: THE THIRD WORLD

And having said what I wanted to say, let me ask three questions:

1. *What* is the self-understanding of medieval Man?
2. *Why* do we need to understand medieval Man?
3. *How* should we proceed in such an endeavor today?

Needless to stress that I have to soar up to a high level of generality in order to make such a bold attempt.<sup>1</sup> A philosopher is a person who succeeds in expressing what everybody means when they say different things. It is from the sky that one sees all rivers flowing into the sea.

#### What Is the Self-Understanding of Medieval Man?

*Anthropology and gnōthi seauton*<sup>2</sup>

There is a delicious irony in the fact that we are here supposed to hold a symposium on the anthropological thought of the Abrahamic traditions in the Middle Ages: a medieval Man would not have understood what we are talking about! "Anthropology" is not a medieval word. *Anthropologos* in Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1125a5) amounts to gossip. *Anthropolegein*, up to Leibniz, meant the human speech used by God in the Holy Scriptures in order to be understood by human beings; a sort of anthropomorphism on God's side, God speaking a human language (*anthropo-legein*). Let us remember that, up to very recently, the center—and origin—of language was supposed to be the Divine, not the Human.

This is more than just curiosity; it already reveals to us a character of the Middle Ages, which later has been inadequately interpreted as a lack of reflective and critical awareness. We have applied an imperfect hermeneutic, as I explain a little later.

An important Christian theological lexicon—so that in a sense one would expect a certain continuity with the Scholastic tradition—begins the entry *Anthropology* as follows: "Anthropologie ist das Wort des Menschen über sich selbst," that is, "the word of the human being about himself."<sup>3</sup> Fair enough, to our ears. But a medieval Man nurtured on the Torah, the Gospels, or the *Quran* would immediately add that no word about oneself,

<sup>1</sup> I have to humbly confess that, being more familiar with the Latin than with the Arabic and Hebrew sources, I chose most of my materials from the Christian tradition. I am aware of this and apologize, although I really feel that my observations should prove valid for all three traditions.

<sup>2</sup> "Know yourself."

<sup>3</sup> *Sacramentum Mundi* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967). Worst still the English translation, which eliminates all mystery: "Anthropology is Man's explanation of himself."

i.e., no witnessing about oneself is a valid witness.<sup>4</sup> Luther, here still a medieval Man, says somewhere: "Der Mensch kann sich erst wahrhaft erkennen, wenn er sich *in fonte ipso, qui Deus est*, erschaut hat" (Man can really recognize himself only if he looks at himself in the source that is God).

Philosophically said, we may wonder whether the epistemological split between subject and object offers a valid method for what we today call anthropology. How can we be sure that the subject (Man) we want to know is the same as the object (Man) of which we speak? Perhaps the ancient thinkers were not so naive, after all. And yet, the *gnóthi seauton*, since the Greeks, has been a constant preoccupation of philosophers, theologians, spiritual writers, and common people. May I parenthetically insert a sentence uttered just a little before the oracle of the Sybil? It is a dramatic dialogue between a seeker of truth and the God Indra. When the latter asks him to choose a boon, and the former refuses, Indra says, "Know me!" He does not say, "Know yourself," but "know me" (*mam eva vijani*), and adds, "The most useful enterprise for Men is to know me."<sup>5</sup> But Indra dwells in the heart, not on Olympus. And I close the cross-cultural brackets—for now.<sup>6</sup>

Is self-knowledge anthropology? Yes, and no. The fact that there is no proper word should make us reflect upon this.

Anthropology can mean the *logos* about Man, and in that sense we may have an objective study about an object (which we call subject-matter) "Man," which is not necessarily identical with the subject who triggered the reflection. All medieval works *de hominis dignitate*, *de dignitate conditionis humanae*, *tractatus de homine*,<sup>7</sup> and the like did not deal with anthropology in the modern sense.

#### *Quaestio Mibi Factus Sum<sup>8</sup>*

To be sure, Augustine said, "*Quaestio mihi factus sum*"<sup>9</sup> in pre-medieval times, but it had a great influence on the entire Middle Ages, at least for Christians. Here *mibi* is not Man, not even *ego*; it is "me," and the context was not an anthropological treatise, but his "confessions" to a personal God, who offered him a mirror for his self-knowledge. Centuries before, the *protoskotus* (the "old obscure one," as I would call Heraclitus), had said, "I have scrutinized myself."<sup>10</sup>

In short, a human *logos* about Man qua Man was suspect, and it was not considered a reliable method to study Man as an object, which, like any other thing, could be analyzed separately in its parts. I am not saying "constituent parts," for any medieval citizen was fully conscious that the parts do not really constitute the whole.

There was no interest in analyzing the components of the human body, for instance. The first classical handbook of anatomy is from 1543: *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* by Andreas Vesalius. Man was not considered a machine, and thus did not elicit the curiosity

<sup>4</sup> See Jn 5:31.

<sup>5</sup> Kausus III.1. See my *The Vedic Experience*. Now Vol. IV, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>6</sup> In an extraordinary painting of Bruegel the Elder kept at the British Museum, and dated 1558, there is a sentence in Dutch: *Niemat enkent he selve* [*Nemo novis seipsum*, "nobody knows himself"]. See E. Castelli, *Umanesimo e simbolismo* (Padova: CEDAM, 1958), 17.

<sup>7</sup> "On human dignity; on the dignity of human condition; treatise on Man."

<sup>8</sup> "I have become a question to myself."

<sup>9</sup> *Confessions*, X.33. And a little before (X.9), cryptically: *Interrogatio mea intentio mea* [my question (to things is) my tension (to them)].

<sup>10</sup> Fragm. 101.

of analyzing its mechanism so as to be able to retrieve its spare parts, as in modern medicine. Before passing a hurried judgment on why on earth medieval people were so "primitive" as not to have any curiosity of how our organism works, we should ask ourselves what conception they had not only of themselves but of the entire reality. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, paraphrasing a famous distich of Rudyard Kipling:

*Man is Man, machine is machine,  
And never the twain shall wed.*<sup>11</sup>

I have glanced at scores of books and papers on the concept of anthropology and, almost with no exception, I have found a certain superior condescension of modern Man, somewhat condoning those medieval folks for not having any anthropology. Perhaps they were too conscious that Man is not and cannot be an object without being reified,<sup>12</sup> and thus killed. For this reason, a medieval anthropology is not so much a matter of what the "learned" people thought about *what* Man is, as of the natural self-understanding of medieval Man. What did the Man of the Middle Ages understand himself or herself to be? What was their self-conception? How did a citizen of that time understand the sense of life, of his or her own being?

But we can have another sense of "anthropology," as in the case of the double meaning of mythology: the application of the *logos* to the *mythos*, and destroying it by this, or simply telling the myth, the narrative of it. In this sense, anthropology as the story of Man is certainly present, and abundantly present, in the Middle Ages: Man not as an object but as the very *subject* conscious of himself when reflecting on the human condition. It is another way of thinking altogether: Man as an "icon." And therefore, if concepts are an-iconic, we cannot have a proper concept of Man.

#### *Tertius Mundus: Intra Deum et Nibi*<sup>13</sup>

I would like to single out only one trait of this medieval anthropology—in the second meaning of the word. I hope the reasons of my choice will become clearer later on. It is the self-understanding of Man cryptically suggested in the title, "Man, the Medieval Being." Here the European Middle Ages are in communion with practically all human traditions. Man is that intermediate being (the Middle Age) between the Divine and the cosmos, God and the world, heaven and earth.

Echoing Platonic and other, more ancient sources, Augustine can describe Man as "something *intermediate* between beast and angel . . . *intermediate Man* . . . below the angels but above the beasts, sharing mortality with beasts, and reason with angels."<sup>14</sup>

And Thomas Aquinas: "Man, having both a spiritual and a corporeal nature, and being a sort of borderline between both, shows to be in relationship with the whole creation, that exists for the sake of his salvation."<sup>15</sup> And further, quoting the *Liber de Causis*: "Man can be considered as the wonderful *connection of all things*. . . . therefore the intellectual soul is said

<sup>11</sup> *Creative Unity* (Madras: Macmillan, 1922), 109.

<sup>12</sup> [Ed. note.] Turned into a thing, from the Latin word *res*.

<sup>13</sup> "A Third World, between God and Nothingness."

<sup>14</sup> *De civitate Dei* IX.13.

<sup>15</sup> *Contra Gentes*, IV.55, n.3936.

to be a sort of horizon and border between the corporeal and incorporeal things.<sup>16</sup> for it is an incorporeal substance, but it is the inner principle shaping the body as well."<sup>17</sup>

The three worlds, the *triloka*, represent a common feature for China, India, Greece, and Africa. There are three worlds: the universe above, belonging to the Gods; the nether world; and the *antariksa* or the intermediate space, as Sanskrit India calls it, populated by all those beings who have still to fulfill their destiny—of which the main is Man.

Our modern memory is so frail that we have forgotten that "third world" (*tertius mundus*) during the entire Middle Ages was a common denomination for Man, from John Scotus to Erasmus, as Aloys Haas<sup>18</sup> shows, with scores of quotations. Between angels and animals, between the pure spirits and the material beings, between the immortals and the mortals, Man is always in the middle. He is the *medium saeculum*, the Middle Age, the middle world. It is for this reason that primitive Christianity, abolishing the historical priesthood and keeping the cosmic one, considered Man as the priest of the universe, the priest as the mediator between heaven and earth—in spite of the return to the Jewish conception by later Christianity, I would say, for political reasons, as the history of medieval Christianity shows. Islam here is more consistent, abolishing the merely anthropological priesthood.

This middle position of Man explains the literally "excruciating" self-understanding of medieval Man, torn apart between the Divine and the demonic, the matter and the spirit, the body and the soul. Without quoting Plato, we may recall Psalm 8: God made Man "little less than the angels," according to the *Vulgata*; but with a greater strength, the Hebrew text says, "little less than a god" (NEB).<sup>19</sup> Man is righteous, of divine stock, with a divine destiny, a unique being, crowned with glory and honor—as the same psalm sings.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, Man is sinner, a worm, just a despicable creature, a slave of his own passions—a wretched creature exploited most of the time by a few powerful and privileged people. Males cannot live without harlots, even if they know it is mortal sin to approach them. "Who is going to deliver me from this body of death?" cried St. Paul.<sup>21</sup>

But the body is also divine and called to rise again. We have scores of texts extolling the dignity of the human body.<sup>22</sup> The medieval Man does not despise the body. And yet, the body is the main cause of sin. This creates an unbearable tension, perhaps the tension of all monotheisms: God is good. He alone is the Supreme Good, but He is precisely a spiritual being, He has no body. The body is not evil, but it is the main occasion of evil. Most Christian saints, even if they theoretically do not despise the body, at best ignore it. I am tempted to say that Gnosticism arises from this unbearable tension between a spiritual God and a material world. Man, caught in between, can reach his goal only if he acknowledges this dualism and rejects his material body. But the three "orthodox" traditions<sup>23</sup> will oppose this logical dualism.

Be it as it may, the self-understanding of traditional Man (and the medieval Man was no exception) is an oscillation between the excruciating dilemma so painfully experienced by Martin Luther: *simul iustus et peccator*, we are righteous and sinners at the same time.

<sup>16</sup> *Liber de Causis* II.22, etc.

<sup>17</sup> *Contra Gentes*, II.68, n.1453.

<sup>18</sup> *Nim din selbes war* (Freiburg: Universitäts-Verlag, 1971).

<sup>19</sup> The LXX already said, "less than the *daimones*" (the lesser Gods).

<sup>20</sup> See Luther, *Disp. de homine*: "The philosophers and Aristotle could not understand, or define, what Man theologically is; but we can, by God's grace, because we have the Bible."

<sup>21</sup> Rom 7:24.

<sup>22</sup> The works of E. Gilson and D. Chenu offer us undeniable witnesses.

<sup>23</sup> Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant.

The medieval Man considers himself as *imago Dei*—even while accepting the Gnostic distinction between “image” and “likeness” in interpreting Genesis 1:26. He knows that creation is “very good,” that Man is a temple of the Holy Spirit,<sup>24</sup> that the human destination is the *visio beatifica*, that the Greeks did not fully attain the *gnóthi seauton* because they did not conceive the divinization of Man—not that they ignored that God made Man (this was also known in ancient times) but that Man would be fully deified.<sup>25</sup> Ramon Llull goes as far as saying, “If God were not Man, He would not have created the World. Yes, precisely: in order that He may become Man, He did create the world.”<sup>26</sup>

May I, again parenthetically, quote from a nonmedieval and non-Western source? “If woman’s nature were identical to man’s, if Eve were a mere tautology of Adam, it would only give rise to a monotonous superfluity. But the fact that she was not so, was proved by the banishment she secured from a ready-made Paradise. She had the instinctive wisdom to realise that it was her mission to help her mate in creating a Paradise of their own on earth.”<sup>27</sup>

Summing it up: The home of Man is neither in heaven nor on earth. Man is an intermediate entity between God and Nothingness, as the Scholastics affirm: a “medi-evil” being *intra Deum et nihil*, says Nicholas of Cusa.<sup>28</sup> And this is already a hint to our second question.

### Why Do We Need to Understand Medieval Man?

*To Understand Ourselves*

I think I remain in keeping with “the spirit of medieval philosophy”<sup>29</sup> by stressing this theo-cosmomorphic aspect of Man as *imago Dei*, the image of a God who is the first creator, but Man also is, as Bonaventure says, *concreator* and *co-operator*.<sup>30</sup> This was the idea of *Homo faber*, an artisan cooperating, and especially con-creating, with the supreme *Artifex*—although soon exploited by the powers that were, and later converted into a proletariat with the incoming of the Industrial Era.

By saying this, I feel I express the self-understanding of the common Man. How—have we not reflected sometimes—could the common Man *not* react against the dogma of hell, if he had not a cosmic idea of it? From a purely anthropocentric (humanistic, we would say today) point of view, a purely human hell, a sociological hell (as we would put it), is such an aberration that no sane human mind could accept it. That, to our delicate ears, horrifying sentence of a medieval saint, one of the Catherines,<sup>31</sup> that the only thing worse than hell would be “that it did not exist” reveals either a masochistic-sadistic folly or a radically different idea of the entire process of cosmic order. We just need to draw our attention to the hells of

<sup>24</sup> Gen 1:31; 1 Cor 6:19.

<sup>25</sup> Roughly speaking: due mainly to the influence of Greek patristics, the medieval Christian Man believes that Man, while not being God, can *become* divine. Whereas the *vedanta* believes that Man *is* divine, but he still dwells in *avidya*, ignorance: he is God, but he does not know it.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in H. G. Gadamer and P. Vogler (eds.), *Neue Anthropologie* (Stuttgart: Thieme), 6:373.

<sup>27</sup> R. Tagore, “Woman and Home,” *Creative Unity*, op. cit., 157–58.

<sup>28</sup> *De docta ignorantia* II.2.

<sup>29</sup> From the title of a well-known work by Étienne Gilson. [Ed. note.]

<sup>30</sup> Bonaventure, *In II Sent. disp.37, dub.2*. See my *El Concepto de Naturaleza* (Madrid: CSIC, 1972), 163.

<sup>31</sup> St. Catherine of Genoa.

other religions to realize the cosmological connection.<sup>32</sup> We should not interpret ideas of the past with categories of the present.

And saying this, I am preparing the answer to my second query: *why* such an interest in studying medieval anthropology? I mention only two mutually related ideas, preceded by a premise.

The premise is that medieval studies cannot be reduced to an outdated archaeology of bygone times, just to foster the curiosity of specialists. My submission is that *the knowledge of the Middle Ages is imperative to safeguard our humanness*.

#### *To Safeguard Our Humanness*

The first idea is this: in the European process of modernization, the enthusiasm of the Western spirit for the "new science" was so great that they threw overboard human and medieval values—which only the Romantic period, in a reactionary way, and the postmodern age, in a confused manner, have tried to retrieve. The Cartesian method of *tabula rasa* is a typical example. Descartes's epistemology is a historical indictment of the past, a conscious break with tradition, in spite of his outward respect for "theology."

Now that the *trance*, or rather the hypnosis, of the technological ecstasy is slowly coming to an end, at least for those who are awakening, due to the bitter empirical evidence that we are bringing the world to the brink of a human and ecological catastrophe; now that the dream of a better world, scientifically preplanned, is becoming a nightmare for two-thirds of the human population; now we may begin to discover that the medieval *kosmology* contained values and insights that we have to rediscover if we want to keep our human identity, and not be changed into thinking computers and reduced to wheels, knots, and bolts of the contemporary mega-machine. This in no way entails a lack of critical judgment on the Middle Ages, or a nostalgic attempt to go back there, since then the remedy would be worse than the malady; but it certainly entails the awareness that we should overcome the mentality of the newly converted, who tend to become fanatical, or of the *nouveaux riches*, who are prone to be ridiculous. It only suffices to look at the image that Europe and the West project outside their colonies, to be convinced of what I am saying.<sup>33</sup>

To assert that the chaos that today affects the so-called Third World is only because they cannot properly handle the benefits of our technocratic civilization is to project our Enlightenment prejudices and ignore that, for them and for us, it is History that moves Man in ways that we have not yet sufficiently explored. It is not only a matter of modern history, with its predominance of the economic factor; it is medieval history that has struck much deeper roots—in them and in us—than what we are ready to admit. We have developed an ethnography and anthropology of prehistoric peoples, but we tend to consider ourselves immune to the historical forces driving Man because we uncritically

<sup>32</sup> See as an example at random, the description of the eight hot, eight cold, and miscellaneous hells mentioned in Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Torch of Certainty*, a kind of catechism of Tibetan spirituality compiled in the nineteenth century, containing the "set of basic meditative practices in current use by all Tibetan sects," as Judith Hanson states in her *Preface* (Boston: Shambhala, 1986).

<sup>33</sup> As perceptive a thinker as Simone Weil could write, before the World War II, after expressing the horror of the possibility of such a war, "une pensée quelque peu réconfortante. C'est qu'une guerre européenne pourrait servir de signal à la grande revanche des peuples coloniaux pour punir notre insouciance, notre indifférence et notre cruauté" [One thought is somewhat comforting. It is that a European war could serve to signal the great revenge of the colonial peoples to punish our carelessness, our indifference, and our cruelty] (quoted in S. Pérement, *La vie de Simone Weil* [Paris: Fayard, 1973], 2:138).

believe we are the superior specimen of the rational animal. But we cannot deny that the Middle Ages form part of our identity.

### *To Reach Human Maturity*

The second, and related, idea is a corollary of the first, expressed in more anthropological terms. We cannot reach our own self-understanding, collectively and individually, if we repress the medieval heritage. We are historically and personally truncated beings if we ignore the medieval Man in us. In order to be brief, I will give two examples, one historical and the other personal.

On the collective and historical side, the present-day events in Europe, and even the intellectual incapacity to handle them politically, stem in great part, although not exclusively, from having neglected the internalization of the medieval history of Europe—as if the history of this corner of Asia had begun with Napoleon or the French Revolution. Not to speak of the events in the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia, I recall my surprise in discovering, back in the 1960s and 1970s, that the people in Turkey remembered more the trauma of the Crusades than those of the two World Wars—to make just a slight overstatement. They would reveal their feelings to me, a Hindū Indian, because they felt free from the instinctive respect for Europeans, and the fear of Christians.<sup>34</sup> In a hundred years, I may be allowed to add, we may be wondering about the events in the so-called Middle East, after having forgotten all about the Gulf War. To sum up, ignoring the Middle Ages has dire political and personal consequences.

I daresay that the Western Man will not reach human maturity, and therefore joy and peace, as long as he does not acknowledge, accept, and criticize his medieval roots, which automatically connect us with the more ancient strata of our humanness. We are not just *res cogitans*, nor just thinking animals either. Our anthropology cannot be reduced to what the *logos* is capable of discovering in ourselves; the inner recesses of Man are full of the accumulated experience of thousands of years. I am affirming that the peoples of the three main Abrahamic traditions will not realize themselves, in the spiritual meaning of the word, until they overcome—overcome, I say, not repress or deny—their Enlightenment syndrome.

Here is the more intimate, and not less momentous example. This applies mutatis mutandis to Jews, Muslims, and Christians, although it may be probably more acute with Christians. Many people today reject the Christian creed because they cannot agree with the development of modern Christianity. This applies to both right- and left-wingers. I am not finding fault with this. They have the right, and I assume they have also understandable reasons for this. I am simply remarking that, by doing this, they, all too often, throw away the baby with the bathwater, having identified Christianity with sacredness and sacredness with religiousness. In practice, still accepting the alleged "claim to absoluteness" of Christianity, they abandon every religiousness, and strand in a dehumanizing no-man's-land in which they suffer. To be a good Catholic in the Middle Ages did not mean abiding by the last pronouncements of the last pope, abuses of power and politics notwithstanding.

I am not certainly defending a return to the medieval Church. I am only suggesting that a better knowledge of the medieval world gives us a sovereign freedom to realize that the essence of these three monotheistic traditions is not so monolithic as it may seem. It gives us

<sup>34</sup> A fearless person like Jiddu Krishnamurti could autobiographically write, "I was much afraid, for most Indian boys are afraid of Europeans." Written in 1913, but revised some forty years later (quoted by Mary Lutyens, *The Life and Death of Krishnamurti* (London: Murray, 1990), 8.

ample space for the creation of a personal religiousness, mature enough to discover that being anticlerical, materialist, or skeptic—and I would daresay, in many cases, even atheist—are more or less balanced forms of being Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, just in a dialectical way.<sup>35</sup> Human archetypes are more powerful than our respective individualities. And the Middle Ages had a mythopoetic and archetypal strength that modernity has not superseded.

This leads us directly to the third question.

### How Should We Understand Medieval Man Today?

"How should we understand medieval Man" is a sort of euphemistic phrase to say: how can we understand ourselves by seeking to interpret medieval Man? Or more precisely, we can only understand the self-understanding of the other through our own self-understanding. We cannot do otherwise. But, on the other hand, the effort of understanding the medieval Man helps us to understand ourselves better. This is a special and vital hermeneutic circle. Anthropology, as the science of a being whose nature is endowed with self-understanding, cannot be a merely objective science—like geology, for instance, in which we only need to make room for the fact that any observation modifies the observed and the observer.

In other words, I am pointing out the fact that there are many possible anthropologies, because there are many human self-understandings, and the *subject-matter* of anthropology is constitutively wide open. I voiced a slogan years ago, claiming that, unless and until the last woman in the last lost island of the last times has had her say, we have no right whatsoever to affirm what Man is, let alone to elaborate a complete anthropology.

I said in the second chapter that, in order to know ourselves, and thus also (at least partially) what Man is, we need to know the Middle Ages. Now, in order to know the Middle Ages, we cannot be satisfied with merely taking cognizance of what others have said about them, or with repeating what the Middle Ages themselves have affirmed. We need actual hermeneutics, which takes into account that the *interpretandum* has to make sense to the interpreter, and that this process changes both the past and the present. And this is my third and last point.

Until now, roughly, we have applied two types of hermeneutics: morphological and diachronic. Both are indispensable, but for our times not sufficient.

— *Morphological hermeneutics* tries to understand the subject matter by directly studying the data and interpreting them as they are understood in the light of the concerned culture. In our case, we have to know the texts, the history, and the immediate background. Classical medievalists have done invaluable work. But this is not enough. We, contemporary people, are trying to interpret a phenomenon of the past, and we need to have a critical look at ourselves too.

— *Diachronic hermeneutics* tries to bridge the temporal gap between those past times and ours. It has been the merit of such studies to dispel the misunderstanding of the Middle Ages as the period of mere obscurantism, ignorance, and the like, for we are now aware that our contemporary interpretation of any given fact of the past (text, event, etc.) has to take into account the refraction and deformation in the very meaning of such facts because of the passing of time and the changing situations. The knowledge of both the context of the text and our own context are essential for a correct interpretation. We have by now learned these lessons. We no longer interpret a page that is a fruit of a symbolic thinking with a purely logical-positivist frame of mind. This also applies to everyday life. I remember a well-known

<sup>35</sup> "Wir Abendländer alle sind Christen" [We all Westerners are Christians], K. Jaspers could write (*Der philosophische Glaube angesichts des Offenbarung* [München: Piper, 1962], 52).

German theologian, during a session of the Vatican Council II, saying to a younger colleague, "When the Roman Hierarchy says: this is *pestifera et haeretica opinio maxime vitanda* [a pernicious and heretical doctrine, to be absolutely avoided], in good German it means: *eine nicht ganz einwandfreie Lehre* [a not completely irreproachable doctrine]."

If the first hermeneutics is monocultural and synchronic, the second is diachronic, and considers the evolution of culture during a short or long period of time. We are the very heirs of the Middle Ages, and therefore, by following the temporal unfolding and changing of an idea, we may properly interpret the meaning it had centuries before. We know the parameters along which the idea has traveled. It is a chapter of the so-called History of Ideas (*Begriffsgeschichte*). All this is fairly well known.

But the specific trait of our time is that of being cross-cultural. We speak of the end of colonialism. Whatever this end, in point of fact, may be, the essence of colonialism is monoculturalism, that is, the belief that one single culture is capable of embracing the universal range of human experience. This is no longer justifiable—or possible—today. The geopolitical impact of mass transport, quick communications, and collective transmigrations makes a cross-cultural atmosphere, and an imperative cross-cultural awareness, unavoidable.

This is the *Sitz im Leben*<sup>36</sup> of a third type of hermeneutics, which has been at least thematically absent in academic as well as in intellectual and political circles in general. The results have been catastrophic, when not ridiculous. We have called African religions "primitive" because we had only one idea of progress; Buddhism "atheistic" because we had only one idea of the Absolute; and Confucianism "just a philosophy" because we had only one idea of what philosophy should be. And in our own days—with all the political consequences—we call other countries "nations on the way to development" because we have no other paradigm than "development" to indicate the dignity and well-being of peoples.

I have called this third type of interpretation *diatopic hermeneutics* because the gap we have to bridge is not only temporal but also spatial—between cultural *topoi*<sup>37</sup> that have not had any direct historical influence on one another. Between, say, the Buddhist worldview and the European worldview of the pompously self-styled "Enlightenment" there is no historical continuity of substantial nature. When a Buddhist speaks of *sānyatā*, for instance, the concept cannot be straightforwardly equated with the Christian *nihilum* or the Platonic *mē on*,<sup>38</sup> which would anyway be the most literal translations. The *topoi* out of which the respective words have sprung, and which confer life to them, are different.

But to come down to the point: hermeneutics is two-way traffic. We interpret the other, but by doing so, our own categories suffer a change, and so does our understanding of ourselves. Is what we call "medieval Christianity" a Germanized form of a Jewish-Greek-Latin Christianity, or the religion of the Christianized Anglo-Saxon-Gothic peoples? Do we mind we do not confuse the psychology of Arabs with Muslim theology? Is there no other kind of Judaism than the Israeli version? The eyes through which we watch the Middle Ages are no longer, and cannot be, exclusively the Enlightenment mentality, nor a literal interpretation in line with the famous "the way it all actually happened."

The study of the other world cultures has changed both our own present-day self-understanding and our insight into the European Middle Ages.

<sup>36</sup> "Vital milieu."

<sup>37</sup> "Patterns."

<sup>38</sup> "Non-being."

Let us elaborate on this idea briefly. After incorporating the experiences of other cultures into our self-understanding, we no longer see ourselves as "the masters and owners of History," to paraphrase the anti-ecological sentence of Descartes. We discover that we are not the only ones in the universe to have reached a critical insight into the nature of Man; that we are not the only civilized race; that the flowery bouquet of human cultures is not all in the jar of our three monotheistic civilizations and their respective Enlightenments; that a linear and much less a straight conception of progress does not do justice to the variety of human experience on earth.

We discover, further, that the European Middle Ages are not so original, for good and for ill, in their ideas and practices: that they represent a sort of constant feature in the growth of a culture. If we interpret the European Middle Ages over a wider background, we realize that experiences that seemed either the fruit of genius or decay were, as it were, inscribed in a more general framework, perhaps even in the genes of humankind. It is not only Christianity that had its universities and its intolerances, or Islam its holy wars and its mosques, or Judaism its Law and its ethnocentrism, just by way of examples. We cannot judge those phenomena as unique; they are members of a wider class.

And, vice versa, this more balanced view of the Middle Ages helps us to better understand other religions, cultures, and historical events. The philosophy of *vedanta*, to give an example in lieu of elaborating a theory, sounds naive only from a Kantian viewpoint, but another tune comes to us if we use Thomas Aquinas's ears. The medieval sacramental doctrine appears somewhat magical to a European, nineteenth-century "enlightened" mind; it shows a different depth if we illuminate it with the light of Śivaism.

A problem that has cost me more than one discussion is the question of the translation of classical texts from other cultures into modern European languages. Indologists, Sinologists, and so-called orientalists in general know their respective classical languages very well; they know the depths, history, and roots of a particular world, say, *dharma*. What they generally don't know is the similar history of the corresponding Western word, say, *religion*. They take the Western word to mean what it means today to the man in the street, which is fair enough, but they often forget that, to the popular mind of other cultures, the oriental word also has a much shallower meaning and use. We need the urgent help of medievalists to tell us that the present-day vernacular expressions have also their history, their depth, and their metaphysical intricacies. Here again, the knowledge of the other helps to know ourselves better.

In other words, what is important is not a new interpretation of past phenomena, but our more mature and deeper self-understanding. We cannot overcome our "provincial" mentality alone, or by mere goodwill. We need the collaboration of both our own past (the medieval experience, in this case) and the other world cultures. To criticize the modern myth of progress without filling the vacuum with anything else may lead to despondency and cultural depression, as we quite often witness nowadays. We need other models, and to benefit from other experiences.

We should not project our own self-understanding onto the medieval Man, nor should we claim to understand him as he understood himself. The relation is neither of identity nor of alterity. The medieval Man is still us, but we are not medieval Man. We cannot simply draw lessons from the past as we learn a chemical reaction in an inorganic substance. We are involved in the past, and part of it. Identification is a wrong method, besides being impossible, and participant observation is not enough, besides being insincere. We need to enlarge both our own understanding and our epistemology—that still nowadays remains the "epistemology of the hunter," as I call it, but this is not the place to unfold these ideas. Suffice it to say that the study of the Middle Ages will liberate us from the straitjacket of our own declining age.

## 3

## MAN AS "MESOCOSM"

Having presented what I was going to say, and having said it, allow me to go over what I have said by boiling it down into three sections.

## Symbolic Thinking

There is such a thing as "symbolic thinking." The analogical, and even more so allegoric and anagogic<sup>1</sup> thought cannot be reduced to the extrapolations of discursive reason, to more or less didactic "leaps into the void," or a secondary function of the intellect. To sum up, there is a symbolic consciousness that cannot be reduced to a rationally reflexive awareness. That which is incommensurable cannot be measured, yet one may be aware of incommensurability. That which is unthinkable cannot be thought, yet one can have the awareness of it. One cannot speak about that which is transcendent, but we can speak of it even without any strictly noetic<sup>2</sup> contents. Not everything having to do with Man can be reduced to *logos*, neither be subject to *co-agitatio*. The medieval Man, in fact, was well aware that the word *cogitatio*, "thinking," comes from *co-agitatio*, "common agitation." Without a doubt, agitation produces thought. But there is also restless *contemplatio*, a surpassing of the mental level, which has nothing to do with irrationality. The medieval Man was aware of his irreducibility to being a mere subject (he would be God) or a mere object (he would not be Man). Man is neither God nor thing. A great task for our times seems to me to be that of integrating symbolic thought with rational thought. And medieval insights are indispensable to us to carry on this task.

## Medium saeculum / Meta ta aiôna

The phrase *media aetas* appeared in the sixteenth century; it seems that the rector of the University of Sankt Gallen, Joachim von Watt (Vaden), who lived from 1483 to 1552, was the first who used it in its now current historical sense. But *media aetas* is not necessarily just a historical category: it might also have a cosmic meaning, or better still, refer to a cosmic anthropology, or even more precisely, an anthropology in which the *anthròpos* is not isolated from the Divine nor from the Cosmic. Man as *mesokosmos* between the superior and inferior worlds, Man as the "Middle Age," as intermediate world. Perhaps something similar to what happened to the word "metaphysics" (which from being a spatial designation, *meta ta physika*, "after the book on Physics," acquired philosophical contents) may happen to the expression *medium saeculum*. Why cannot a temporal designation such as "Middle Ages" pass on to having an anthropological meaning? This "medieval" anthropology gives Man a

<sup>1</sup> In the medieval allegorical interpretation of the Bible, the sense referring to the "last things."  
[Ed. note.]

<sup>2</sup> Intellectual, referring to knowledge.

mediating character that seems precisely to be what our anthropocentric civilization lacks: a constitutive "re-ligation" with the Divine and an equally natural binding with the Earth. We are neither Gods nor dust, yet without the Divine and the Earthly, we would not be Men.

### The Missing Link

Moreover, the Middle Ages are, quite paradoxically—as we mentioned—the nexus that joins us to practically all other world cultures, the "missing link" between Western modernity and the other civilizations existing on earth. There is no possible dialogue unless we place ourselves on equal terms, and if we do not sit together at the same round table. I take the liberty of suggesting that it is the Middle Ages that provides us with this round table in miniature. The medievalist would then be the key person to contribute to peace, which is today so elusive not so much because humankind is evil, but rather because these days we are living with a deficient anthropology.

My suggestion has the practical consequence of putting medieval studies at the very core of one of the most important tasks of our times. Since Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger we have learned about the "Europeanization of the world." But now this same world is realizing that this dynamism of history is leading us to the homogenization of the planet and, in the end, to a catastrophe. The elite classes of the rest of the world have not recovered from their enthusiasm (I was about to say "drunkenness") caused by the techno-science onto which they have projected all their frustrated Messianisms. It is up to Europe, the cradle of the technocratic civilization, to awaken humanity from Hegel's dream, or from Orwell's or Aldous Huxley's nightmares. The Middle Ages present us with the experience and the possibility to overcome it all.

This *media aetas* would therefore have a double usefulness: that of binding us to the *theokosmos* from which Man has alienated himself, and at the same time, that of binding modern Man back to his deepest "telluric"<sup>3</sup> roots and to the rest of the Earth cultures, that feel alienated from so-called modern progress, but in communion with the medieval experience of European Man.

There are many people who know medieval studies better than I do. I have just sought to explain that medieval studies are at the very center of the human task of becoming fully human.

Perhaps the Poet's words gain a prophetic meaning from this perspective:

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita  
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,  
ché la diritta via era smarrita.<sup>4</sup>*

Freely and "medievally" retranslated:

*At the midpoint in Life  
the Middle Age is found  
in a dark forest  
(to redirect us back to the straight path  
from which we have strayed).*

<sup>3</sup> From Latin *tellus*, "earth."

<sup>4</sup> Dante, *Inferno* I.1–13.

In the "middle age" of human experience, in a moment of global disorientation, perhaps my words may have been of some use so as not to get disheartened in the search of *Beatrice*, who can guide our steps.

## SECTION XXII

### RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, AND CULTURE\*

**Summary:** Religion, philosophy, and culture are three "elements" of the human reality. If the first could be compared to the feet with which Man journeys toward his destiny, philosophy could represent the eyes that scrutinize that journey, and culture, the earth on which Man is walking during his concrete pilgrimage. Interculturality represents the relativity (not the relativism) of everything human, and therefore of these three notions.

The question of the nature of philosophy is already a philosophical question, and intimately connected with what religion stands for. An intercultural approach shows that one cannot separate philosophy from religion, and that both are dependent on the culture that nurtures them. In order to do justice to the problem, we need to introduce the function of *mythos*, which complements that of *logos*.

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\* This text reproduces, with some variations, the inaugural address of the first Congress of Intercultural Philosophy, held in Mexico City in March 1995. "Filosofía y cultura: una relación problemática," *ILU Revista de ciencias de las religiones* 1 (Madrid, 1996), 125–48. An English version was published in *Interculture* 135 (October 1998) (Montreal).

## INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is but the conscious and critical accompaniment of Man's journeying toward his destiny. This journeying is called "religion" in many cultures.

The following considerations, intending to put or discover a certain order in the world of religio-cultural galaxies, will serve as prolegomena to the unavoidable problem, today more than ever, of the meeting of religions.

Intercultural philosophy situates itself in *terra nullius* (no-man's-land), in a virgin place that no one has yet occupied; otherwise, it would no longer be intercultural but would belong to a determined culture. Interculturality is no one's land, it is utopia, situated between two (or more) cultures. It must keep silent. Now today, since it is coming to vogue, and because historical archetypes repeat themselves, I fear that we are finding ourselves, like Moses, face-to-face with a "promised land," but without anyone having promised it to us; maybe because it does not exist—except as a utopia.<sup>1</sup>

When Aaron enters it, that land ceases already to be "promised" and he appropriates it as a Hebrew land, which must "expel" its original inhabitants. When Christianity and later modern science have entered these foreign lands, they equally believed that these were promised lands, they believed that their duty was to "expel" the ancient errors and convert the "Natives." It is not customary for philosophy to go out and conquer or convert, but it has often been the one that has justified such intercultural skirmishes.

This somewhat polemical introduction would like to put us on our guard against the risk that the growing movement toward intercultural studies be nothing but the symptom of a culture, which, because it is in crisis, seeks to expand its "market," as does the capitalistic system with its investments in the "Third World."

Interculturality is problematic. The very moment that I open my mouth to speak, I am obliged to use a concrete language, and thus I am completely in a particular culture; I am on a land that already belongs to someone. I am in my culture, cultivating my land, speaking my language. And if I must, moreover, be understood by my readers, I must necessarily enter a land that is common to all. While we have, in a certain sense, conquered space, since there are readers on all continents, we have been unable to dominate time, since we are necessarily contemporary. While assuming the past and taking into consideration the possible futures, we communicate in the present and cannot escape the myth of contemporaneity, no matter how polydimensional it may be. We are obliged to representation.

What therefore is the territory that belongs to a problematic intercultural philosophy? My answer would be simple if we were not dealing with philosophy. It would then be sufficient to say that it is a territory acknowledged as common, for example that of music, and then approaching it according to the distinct perspectives of our respective cultures. But this is not valid in the case of that human activity that claims to leave thematically no territory outside of its critical reflection.

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<sup>1</sup> The major part of all of the themes considered in this article have already been at least sketched in many of my writings, even if only those are mentioned that can help to justify the brevity of this text.

It follows that we are thematically obliged to question the very nature of our question about philosophy and about the very soil where what we call "philosophy" has flourished.

In the following text, after having put forward three reflections on the issue of philosophy, followed by three considerations on what is culture, we shall then dedicate three chapters to our specific problematic.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See the pioneering work of R. Fornet Betancourt, *Filosofía intercultural* (Mexico: Universidad Pontificia, 1994); and even more recently, R. A. Mall, *Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen* (Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).

# 1

## PHILOSOPHY

We have already insinuated that we initially and provisionally understand by philosophy—that human activity that asks questions about the very foundations of human life under the heavens and on earth.

### What Are We Talking About?

Let us repeat: the question about philosophy is already philosophical, and, thus, already belongs itself to philosophy.

To which philosophy? Obviously, to all philosophy, as we have just said. But the answer to be given to the question What is that philosophy? is no longer a common one, since we shall give one answer or another according to the particular conception that we have of philosophy. Now, this conception depends on the culture within which we elaborate an answer. We are dealing here not with what is called a hermeneutical but a prior philosophical circle. We cannot ask the question of what philosophy is except within a specific philosophy, even if, in most cases, that philosophy is not explicit.

The answers are varied. We know many of them: we ask about Being, about Reality, about the nature of the question itself, about what saves us, makes us aware, critical, free, happy, gives a meaning to our life, allows us to act, and so on.

What is it about? It is about knowing what different cultures have understood by philosophy.

The "histories of philosophy" have much to say about that question. But what is the question asked by these philosophies? Obviously, they relate the "history" of the different conceptions of "philosophy." Within cultures where philosophy has a certain validity or importance, no major problem arises. But once again, what are we talking about when the word does not exist? How are we going to translate it, and what criterion do we have, in order to know that our translation is correct?

This brings us to an unavoidable methodological issue.

### Homeomorphic Equivalents

The majority of studies on this theme have been more or less monocultural. This is due to the global predominance of Western culture during the last five hundred years, and to the concrete fact that a Hellenic word has been used to formulate the question. The question of what philosophy is, was asked on the basis of what the Greeks originally understood that word to mean. It is on the basis of that one culture and with instruments of that same culture that we have approached those foreign lands, those foreign cultures.

This is all the more meaningful since the majority of learned people from other cultures have hastened to show us that what we call by that name also existed in their respective

cultures. Thus we have important studies on Indic, Chinese, Bantu, Japanese, and other philosophy, as being so many branches that enrich the known studies on ancient, medieval, German, Spanish . . . philosophy.

These experts usually tell us that their respective philosophies are ten times richer in certain aspects that have been neglected by Western philosophy, and that they help us to broaden and deepen the very conception of philosophy. But it is rare that they have asked themselves in a critical and thematic way, what question they were asking when asking the question of philosophy. We know today, for example, that there are idealists in India, materialists in China, mystics in Japan, a more sensuous and concrete philosophy in Africa, and so on. The majority of those who cultivate (or engage in) philosophy have started from the Western model and have made known to us that what is called philosophy in the West has existed and still exists in other cultures. But the Greek concept of philosophy, with all its variation and reforms, continues to be the paradigm according to which one proceeds to research what is philosophy in other cultures.

When translating the word, one seeks equivalents to the concept of philosophy, equivalents conditioned by the original Greek model—even if the notion has somewhat evolved subsequently.

I have introduced, a few years ago, the notion of *homeomorphic equivalents* as a first step toward interculturality. One should, in our case, research both the eventual equivalent notions to philosophy in other cultures, and the symbols (not necessarily the concepts and even less a unique concept) that express the homeomorphic equivalents of philosophy. Homeomorphic equivalents are not mere literal translations, any more than they merely translate the role that the original word claims to play (in this case: philosophy), but they play a function which is equivalent (analogous) or comparable to that supposedly played by philosophy. It is therefore not a conceptual but a functional equivalent, that is, an analogy of the third degree. One does not seek the same function (as that exercised by philosophy), but the function that is equivalent to that exercised by the original notion in the corresponding cosmovision.

Let us consider a few examples that may help us. "Brahman" is not a translation for "God," since the concepts do not correspond (their attributes not being the same), and since the functions are not identical (Brahman not having to be creator, providence, personal, as God is). Each one of these two words express a functional equivalence within the corresponding two cosmovisions.

There is more. In that example, the correlation is almost biunivocal (one word homeomorphically corresponding to the other), but it could not be. We can, for example, translate "religion" by "dharma" without necessarily translating "dharma" by "religion." "Dharma" equally means duty, ethics, element, observance, energy, order, virtue, law, justice, and has been even translated as reality. But the word "religion" can also mean *sampradāya, karma, jati, bhakti, marga, pīja, daivakarma, nimayaparam, punyasila*. . . . Each culture is a world.

If by philosophy, one then understands the intellectual activity that clarifies the use of our concepts or that purifies our language, we shall not seek what plays that role in the other culture, but what accomplishes the function equivalent to that which the clarification of concepts and words plays in the first conception that we have talked about.

There are at least thirty-three notions in classical Sanskrit that could be homeomorphically compared to the equivalent function of philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See my study "Satapathaprajnā: Should We Speak of Philosophy in Classical India?" in *Contemporary Philosophy*, G. Floistad (ed.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993), 7:11–67.

One can therefore discuss the issue of whether this activity of the human mind should be called philosophy. We believe that it is appropriate if we do not wish to condemn ourselves to a cultural solipsism; but we must not forget that the relationship must be established in both directions, moving for example from the Greek equivalents to those of the other culture, and from the latter to the Hellenic ones. . . .

We cannot claim to define through one single word what intercultural philosophy is, nor even presuppose that such a philosophy exists. What is possible, however, is to inquire about the many homeomorphic equivalents, and, from within the other culture, to try to formulate what can correspond to what we are trying to say when we say the word "philosophy."

We must seek a middle way between the colonial mentality that believes that we can express the totality of the human experience through the notions of a single culture, and the opposite extreme that thinks that there is no communication possible between diverse cultures, and which should then condemn themselves to a cultural apartheid in order to preserve their identity. I am thinking of the case of Bhutan as a political example. Our problem is not merely a "speculative" one.

Without claiming in the least to say something that is universally valid, let me venture, as I journey through this middle way, to sketch an answer to the problematic that we have set forth.

### What It Is That We Are Talking About

Given the contingent fact that today's Western languages are somewhat intercultural vehicles, we could adopt the Hellenic word "philosophy" as a symbol of something, which, up till now, had no reason to be present in the meaning of what was called philosophy originally and that is still called philosophy.

What we could call intercultural philosophy would then not be a new species of philosophy, alongside the classifications offered to us by the histories of philosophy, but it would be a new genus of philosophy, an enriching of the term beyond its cultural limits.

Just as—as we shall see—the great cultures of mankind are not real species of a real genus, but each one of them is rather a genus (with subcultures as species), so the intercultural notion of philosophy would represent a distinct superior genus (which we could perhaps continue to call philosophy) and not another species of a unique genus.

This kind of supergenus, of a purely formal character and valid only within a specific moment of time and space, would be a transcendental, and not a categorial relation with what, until now, has been called philosophy. This philosophy would be a formal transcendental and not a category. In this sense, intercultural philosophy does not exist as does an idealistic philosophy (one that presents certain common traits), or a Catalan philosophy (without content that is necessarily common, but cultivated by the Catalans or in the Catalan language). An intercultural philosophy exists only as transcendental to the different human activities that correspond homeomorphically to what, in a certain culture, we call philosophy.

As I try to follow this middle way, which avoids solipsism without falling into colonialism, I shall try to describe in a very provisional manner, as follows, the philosophical activity that would have a certain intercultural validity:

*Philosophy could be understood as the activity by which Man participates consciously and in a more or less critical manner in the discovery of reality and orients himself within the latter.*

By saying *activity*, we wish to surmount the reductionism that is represented by a certain conception of philosophy as being something purely theoretical. An intercultural philosophy cannot eliminate the dimension of *praxis*, understood not only in a Platonic and/or Marxist

sense, but also eminently existential, to use another polysemic word. The word "activity" also indicates that it is a matter of acting, of a human *agere*, which need not therefore be limited to a mere mental or rational operation.

By using the word *Man*, we refer to the philosophical activity that is specific to the human being. Neither angels nor animals philosophize. Philosophy is an activity, belonging to Man as such. Philosophy would be that primordially and specifically human activity.

The notion of *participation* in our description claims to indicate the passive aspect of philosophical activity.

Life, as well as the reality in which we live, has been given to us and we find ourselves immersed in it. We are, as we participate in it, something anterior and superior to ourselves, both individually and collectively. Philosophical activity is an activity of acknowledgment before being one of pure knowledge.

By qualifying philosophical activity as *conscious*, we wish to indicate that consciousness embraces an activity and a reality that is much broader than reason, not only because Spanish and French words include very wisely moral conscience, that is, the knowledge of good and evil, but also because while it includes rationality and intelligibility, it does not limit itself to the latter. We are aware that there is something that we do not understand, we are aware that both Nothingness and Being, even if they are unintelligible, can be real. There exists a thinking that is not discursive, nor deductive, an imaginal, iconic awareness, a nonreflexive intuition, and so on. And experience shows us that many cultures have cultivated these types of consciousness, which are not included in rationality, without necessarily falling into irrationality, the latter being incompatible with philosophical activity, thus abandoning the realm of the human, strictly speaking.<sup>2</sup>

We add the word *critical* because we seek to underline both the intellectual dimension of philosophical activity and its questioning character. Every man could potentially be a philosopher, but the word "critical" suggests that the first innocence has been lost, and that, in the vision of reality held by any man, the philosopher asks the why of what is given to him. The word "critical" comprises also reflection, *skepsis*, and introspection. Human consciousness is constitutively *consciousness*: it is a *gnosis* that knows that we are not alone (*ni estamos ni somos solos*). We have added degrees to critical consciousness, for even if a minimum of self-consciousness seems to belong to all philosophy, it is not necessary to accept a Kantian type of "critique" as being essential to the notion of philosophy.

No matter what, with a more or less critical consciousness, philosophy is a *discovery* of what is and of what we are. Not only is reality disclosed to us by itself, but we also discover it in virtue of our active participation in the dynamism of reality itself of which we are a part. There is no point in saying that this discovery or revelation takes place within some limited parameters that make us who we are and of which we are aware. Philosophical activity is as much a discovery of reality as that of what we are. It is a partial, hypothetical, doubtful, imperfect, contingent discovery, but a re-revelation in the last analysis. A revelation which, because it is one, continues to be so—that is, an unveiling that never ceases, not only because of a possible infinitude of reality, but because of our own finitude, which results in that every discovery is at the same time a covering over. Practically all philosophies have known that truth has a seductive appearance; it simultaneously reveals and hides itself. Not only would

<sup>2</sup> One can quote as an example the work edited by D. Fraser, *African Art as Philosophy* (New York: Interbook, 1974), who overcomes the aesthetic and anthropological "clichés" that are usually applied, in a more or less condescending manner, to African culture (sensual, aesthetic, vivacious, joyous, primogenital—but with little "thinking").

absolute truth dazzle us, but it would not enlighten us, for it could not be total if we ourselves were not in it. Or, as we shall insinuate further, all incursion of the light or of the intelligibility of *logos* within the obscure realm of the *mythos* is accompanied by another shadow that the *logos* leaves behind it and that the *mythos* discreetly covers anew. All demythization is accompanied by a remythization;<sup>3</sup> it is always necessary that something be "pre-sup-posed."

By *reality*, we understand all that is, or is thinkable, all that can enter our consciousness, the representation (whether realistic or idealistic), the *idam* of the Upanishads. . . . We exclude neither Being nor Nothingness, nor do we limit ourselves to what can be expressed by the verb "to be." We use this word as the broader and (maybe) deeper of all—not as all (no theory whatsoever is formulated here), but as an ultimate symbol that would hence encompass also what could dialectically appear as non-real. Let us not forget that the great challenge of interculturality is the relativization of all *a priori*.

The notion of *orientation*, finally, wishes to underline the vital aspect, both practical and existential, of philosophy. It is through philosophy that Man gives orientation to his life, forges his destiny, and moves toward what he considers his goal (whatever may be its meaning). Philosophical activity would thus be that specifically human activity by which Man realizes as such—what many cultures have called the salvific character of philosophy, or of what it is customary to translate as religion. This orientation may postulate a North or at least a magnet, but it is philosophy, as conscious activity about the meaning of life or of reality, which puts the compass into our hands. And while some extremist positions say that we should do away with the compass, that swaying on our own without an (external) compass would also be the interiorization of a compass that indicates no other direction but the one that we create or imagine. From the starting point of interculturality, philosophy can be considered as the conscious and more or less critical companion of Man's journey—corresponding in many cultures to what could be translated as religion.

It is obvious that every word used will be differently interpreted by different philosophies. It follows that an intercultural philosophy questions all notions, and each one of the notions of a current in a given culture.

After having taken all these precautions, I believe that one can speak provisionally of intercultural philosophy as being a transcendental relation to what we call philosophy. We have not thereby left our culture, we have not jumped over our own shadow, but we have opened ourselves, as much as possible, to the experience of the reality of other cultures, ever ready to dialogue with the latter, as we shall now say.

<sup>3</sup> Playing with the possibilities of the German language, I have introduced a few years back the word "Unmythologisierung." See my article (published in Italian in 1961), "Die Unmythologisierung in der Begegnung des Christentums mit dem Hinduismus," *Kerygma und Mythos* 6, no. 1 (1963): DD 211–35.

## 2

## CULTURE

It is well known that the term "culture" underwent, during the seventeenth century in Europe, a certain mutation, which has crystallized in a modern sense only since a little less than a century ago. It is a term that remains suspect to some, especially the Anglo-Saxons. Before that, culture meant something else.

"*Cultura animi*" may be one of the better definitions of philosophy (Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 11.13). The word means "I cultivate" (*cum, curatio, cultus*), implying honor and veneration. Culture was always culture of something. Hence has it come to mean what we still mean when we speak of a cultivated man. And it is through the intermediary of "civilization" that "culture" has come to take on the meaning that is widespread today.<sup>1</sup>

### The Encompassing Myth

To the hundreds of definitions of culture that exist today, I shall risk adding one more, which has at least the advantage of being maybe the shortest of them all, and which finally coincides with the majority of accepted descriptions. All the latter say that culture is constituted by rituals, customs, opinions, dominant ideas, and ways of life that characterize a certain people at a given period. If language is an essential element, history and geography are equally cultural factors.

We summarize all that in the word *myth*, understood as symbolizing that which we believe at such a deep level that we are not even aware that we believe it: "it is useless to say it," "it is under-stood," "it is obvious," "we shall not pursue the investigation any further...." We question myth only when we already partly stand outside it; this is because it is precisely the *myth* that offers us the basis from which the question as question makes sense. For the myth gives us the horizon of intelligibility where we must situate any idea, any conviction, and any act of consciousness so that they may be held by our mind.

Of course, there are particular myths, and we must also distinguish between, on the one hand, mythologies, mythologoumena, mythemes, and on the other, myth strictly speaking, which is what makes possible a narration of myths, a science about myths, more or less explicit groups of myths, and the themes themselves as rational translations of what the myths themselves allow to appear as translatable. All this should not be confused with the myth strictly speaking, that horizon that gives the condition of intelligibility of everything that is subsequently said.

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<sup>1</sup> See, among many other studies, vol. 3 of *Europäische Schlüsselwörter*, titled *Kultur und Zivilisation*, edited for *Sprachwissenschaftliches Colloquium* (Bonn-München: Hueber, 1967), and the chapter "Zivilisation, Kultur," *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 7, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992).

Each culture, in a sense, could be described as the encompassing myth of a collectivity at a certain moment in time and space; it is what renders plausible, credible, the world in which we live, where we are. This accounts for the flexibility and mobility of myth as well as the impossibility of grasping our own myth, except when we hear it from the mouth of others, because having accorded the latter a certain credibility or when it has ceased to be a myth for us. Myth and faith are correlative, just as there exists a special dialectic between *mythos* and *logos* (as well as between *logos* and *mythos*).

Each culture possesses a cosmovision and reveals the world in which we live—in which we believe to be. Each culture is a galaxy that secretes its self-understanding, and with it, the criteria of truth, goodness, and beauty of all human actions.

Cultures are not folklore, as certain mainly political milieux are in the habit of interpreting them, when they speak arrogantly and condescendingly of multicultural tolerance. Cultures are not mere specific forms of a genus called human civilization; each culture is a genus. Cultures are not abstract species of a single sovereign genus. The sovereign genus, which would be human culture, exists only as an abstraction.

Let us say it more academically: *there are no cultural universals*, that is, concrete meaningful contents valid for all the cultures for mankind throughout all times. What one calls human nature is an abstraction. And every abstraction is an operation of the mind which removes (abstracts) from a greater reality (as seen by this mind) something (less universal) which it considers as important. There cannot be cultural universals, for it is culture itself that makes possible (and plausible) its own universals.

By saying that there are no cultural universals, we are using a way of thinking that is foreign to the modern "scientific" mentality, in which predominates (when not dominates) simple objectivity (and objectibility) of the real. Culture is not simply an object, since we are constitutively immersed in it as subjects. It is the one that makes it possible for us to see the world as objects, since self-consciousness, that is, subjectivity, essentially belongs to the human being. It ensues that all classification of cultures is nothing but a formal abstraction with a claim to objectivity to which no real culture can be reduced. Culture is the encompassing myth that makes it possible for us to believe the world in which we live. Every cosmology is the *logos* of a *kosmos* that which shows itself to us as such, thanks to the *mythos* which renders it visible to us.

There are no cultural universals. But there are, for sure, *human invariants*. Every man eats, sleeps, walks, speaks, establishes relationships, thinks. . . . But the way according to which each one of the human invariants is lived and experienced in each culture is distinct and distinctive in each case.

It is undeniable that at certain given moments of mankind, there are myths that acquire a greater universality than others, but even in such cases, the way we usually interpret them is distinct. "You shall not kill" can be the formulation of an abstract universal myth that we all interpret today as the condemnation of cannibalism; however, the real belief in an absolute "Thou shalt not kill" is far from being universal. Let us not forget that a myth is constitutively inobjectifiable and that it is myth (in the sense in which we use this word) only for those who believe in it. As for the others, these are myths only in a condescending and pejorative sense of the word, as used in the modern colonial era. We see the myths of others as more or less legendary mythologies—we do not see the beam in our own eye. It is very revealing to inquire whence and why a "mythology" was born (not the narrative, *mythos-legein*) as a rational science about others' myths (legends). All those who do not come from the South or the Center of England speak English with an accent: only the "natives," of course, speak without an accent. Everything that did not fit into the mental framework of what is called

the Enlightenment, which flourished precisely when the West had politically "conquered" more than three-quarters of the planet, has been called primitive myth, and still nowadays, "on the way to development."

Cultural respect requires that we respect those ways of life of which we disapprove, or even those that we consider as pernicious. We may be obliged to go as far as to combat these cultures, but we cannot elevate our own to the rank of universal paradigm in order to judge the other ones.

This is the great challenge of pluralism and one of the cements of interculturality.

### Nature and Culture

We can proceed with a double assertion:

a. Culture is the field that makes it possible for us to cultivate the world that it itself presents to us, so that Man may become fully human and achieve his fullness.

b. Culture is the specific form of human nature. The nature of Man is cultural. Culture is not an additive to Man, it is not something artificial. Man is a cultural animal. Culture is not extrinsic to him, but natural. Man is a being that is naturally cultural—or culturally natural. The ultimate criterion for condemning another culture will therefore consist in showing that it is antinatural—although the very idea of nature is already culture-specific.

One could critique Western civilization by saying that it is the culture that has championed a dichotomy between the natural nature and cultural nature of Man, so that it has separated religion (a cultural fact), from what is natural, thus converting it either into something that is supernatural, or into an ideology (comparable to a mere doctrinal superstructure). By thus separating culture from nature, it has constructed a culture that is artificial in the pejorative sense (although it is said to be scientific). According to the Chinese proverb, one cannot stay too long on the tip of one's toes. It seems to me that it is a key for understanding Western culture.

Yet the Western experience is fertile. We cannot separate nature from culture, but neither should we say that they are simply the same. The problem in the West has been acute ever since the Greeks. The *physei*, what corresponds to *physis*, to nature, is not identically the same as *nomoi*, as what pertains to *nomos*, to the norm. To separate them or to make them into something identical would lead to the destruction of the *humanum*. Their relation is nondualistic. Culture is neither a mere accident of Man, nor is it his substance: it is not identical to human nature. There can be antinatural cultures.

Much water has flowed under the bridges since the Greeks. Maybe the following considerations could be of some help here.

While in the world of nature, there are things, in the world of culture, there are objects. Here either, it certainly is not possible to separate them. Everything that Man touches, no matter how natural he believes it to be, is always at the same time cultural. So-called natural things never cease to be representations of human consciousness. But natural things are distinct from artificial ones, especially from "ideas," "representations," "idols," "images. . .," which do not claim to be in the world of nature, but to be real in the human world of culture. These realities we call objects, since they are undoubtedly projections, objects of our mind, objects of thinking. Justice, for example, is not a thing: being a cultural reality, it is an object of human thinking.

For animals also and maybe also for sentient awareness, there are things. But for Man, there are also objects, and he thinks objects as such. That is why he can thus meditate upon them, experiment with them, and manipulate them.

We must here take up a theme that is unavoidable when speaking of an intercultural philosophy. An object is a representation of human consciousness. From that perspective, natural things, as we call them, are also objects. But it is the human mind itself that distinguishes between the objects that exist in nature and those that belong to the world of culture. A horse does not belong to the same order of reality as does justice, but one cannot say that an African mask, in its ritual reality, is simply natural, nor exclusively cultural. The whole sacramental view of the universe, whether Hindu, Christian, Bantu... presupposes this nondual relationship between the natural and the cultural.

Objects of thinking are cultural invariants. Every man thinks, and to think is to think something. This something is the *objectum* of thinking, what the activity of the mind projects, throws in front of itself in virtue of the stimulation it has received.

The concept, however, is not such an invariant. The concept is a universal in the most technical meaning of the term; it is an abstraction of the mind that grasps or claims to grasp the "quiddity" of a thing, called essence, substance, representation, idea, or as one wishes. The same word has been used with many meanings. But the concept is not a cultural universal. And this is what we wish to underline: not all cultures operate with concepts.

The concept, which is maybe the genial "invention" of Socrates (or of the Platonic Socrates), in spite of the protests of Isocrates at that time, has become the best instrument of Western philosophy. For Hegel, concept is the mediator par excellence between being and becoming, and not only an instrument, but, so to speak, the soul of the things themselves.

The concept has been identified with the intelligibility of a thing: it follows that if philosophy wants to know what things are, it must necessarily operate with concepts. The concept has thus become the unique instrument of philosophy.

There are, however, homeomorphic equivalents to philosophy, which do not operate with concepts. I am not referring only to what the nineteenth-century colonial mentality has called prelogical or preconceptual thinking, but equally to systems of thought as elaborate as a good portion of Indic philosophy.<sup>2</sup> There is, for example, a philosophical activity of Man that operates with symbols and not with concepts. It does not therefore try to do a conceptual algebra that corresponds to reality, but to present or to make possible intuitions of reality itself. There are numerous classes of intelligibility, many ways of being aware of reality and of participating in it. That is the intercultural challenge.

### Interculturality

We have already asserted that interculturality is the philosophical imperative of our times. But we have mentioned a twofold temptation: monoculturalism and multiculturalism.

There is a *monoculturalism* that is as subtle as it is well intentioned. It consists in admitting a vast range of cultural diversity, but against the unique backdrop of a common denominator. Our categories have taken root so deeply in the substratum of modern Man that it is difficult for him, for example, to imagine that he could think without concepts or without applying the law of causality. One postulates therefore a universal and hence common reason, and a unique intelligibility: likewise, one finds it difficult to see how we could abstract from our categories of space, time, and matter.

An example, which is powerful in every sense of the word, can be taken from modern science, which claims to be universal, forgetting that its cements themselves have been drawn up from a particular culture. We have already mentioned as monocultural examples the

<sup>2</sup> See my book *La experiencia filosófica de la India* (Madrid: Trotta, 1997), which keeps me from being more explicit.

"scientific" ideas of space and time, to which we could add those of matter, energy, and above all the possibility of translating in algebraic terms the phenomena of nature, the docility of the latter toward set and determining laws. Because of the spectacular feats that it has made possible, modern science, often without willing it, has converted these polysemic symbols already mentioned (time, space, matter) into univocal and definable (circumscribed, although not understood) signs.

Whatever may be the case, since we shall not enter now into a global evaluation of modern science and of its underlying epistemology, we only affirm that all these pillars on which modern science rests are not intercultural: they belong to one culture only. We do not intend to say by this that other forms of thought and their underlying myths are more valid or less valid, nor that they should or should not disappear. We are only stating that we have here a monoculturalism that does not allow the full blossoming of other cultures.

Let us repeat that monoculturalism is not incompatible with tolerance of all those ways of life that accept the encompassing myth of modern culture. In the present situation, the latter could be described as the law of the market, the power of money, the universal value of modern science, the technological complex as the necessary framework of the common life of human beings, and above all, the specific way of thinking and seeing life. To the dominant monoculturalism belong the major portion of what are usually called the definite assets of modern science, such as the fact that it is the earth that rotates around the sun and not vice versa, the law of entropy or the malaria cycle. Modern Man is not ready, and rightly so, to accept a cultural relativism that would bring him to doubt about his "scientific progress." But the cultural relativity of an intercultural discourse has nothing to do with such relativism. The relativity inherent to interculturality does not question the discoveries of a culture, but neither does it absolutize them. It relativizes them, that is, it considers them valid and legitimate within a given culture and within the parameters admitted by the latter—in a word, within the encompassing myth of that culture. Not to be disposed to relativize the present cosmology when we have relativized all others is equivalent to a fossilization of time and to the very negation of the idea of progress—unless one wishes to domesticate the latter in order to oblige it to a gratuitously postulated linearity or to set the realm in which the "paradigm" could change a very significant attitude of modern monoculturalism. We have indicated at the beginning that monoculturalism is very rooted in the human mind and difficult to surmount. Here again dawns the challenge of interculturality.

Our civilization accepts easily other cultures as long as the latter accept the rules of the game that the former postulates. And it is obvious that because of its very power, our civilization can allow itself the luxury of being more tolerant than weaker cultures.

What has brought about the theoretical justification of monoculturalism is the practical triumph of evolutionary thinking, which in turn is indebted to the linear conception of time. According to that thinking, mankind follows a linear "progress," with its meanderings, twists, and turns, up to an "omega" point that some philosophers interpret as the secularization of the eschatological thinking of Abrahamic religions. It is not so much a matter of the hypothesis according to which Man has come from the monkey as of the fact of believing that we have evolved within a geography and history which have a double dimension, and that the meaning of human life, of mankind, and of the whole cosmos consists in "developing," that is, evolving toward that "end." Evolution is primarily a form of thinking that believes it can reach the intelligibility of a phenomenon if it has explained its linear temporal gestation—in other words, if it visualizes the trajectory according to which a given phenomenon has come to be, by riding a time that has brought it all the way up to us. Cosmology is being reduced to a cosmogony; to explain the gestation of something is equivalent or comparable

to having understood it: the *how* has then become equivalent or "equiparable" to the *why* and has replaced the *what-for* to control the *how* it is superfluous to know the *what*. What is important, because that is what is efficient, is to "know" *how* things operate.

If such be the case, it is enough to "know" the evolution of Man and of cultures in that unique sense. The official language of the United Nations, which speaks of "developed" and "developing" countries, is highly revealing. We are in a monocultural world: there is no consolation in saying that it is pluricultural. Only one culture sets the rules of the game.

It is precisely the task of philosophy to reach the ultimate roots of reality and to become aware of this monoculturalism, which is invisible from within our own myth. Then, possibly, we may find a window that will allow us to find an exit. We are saying exit, because it is practically a world consensus that we must exit from this modern civilization, which has no future, since it cannot continue to grow and develop indefinitely.

An intercultural philosophy could show us that other civilizations, without denying their negative aspects, have had other myths that allowed them to live a full life—obviously for those who have believed in them; but we must immediately add here that this is in no way a matter of idealizing the past or of seeing only the bright side of other cultures. And that is what precisely brings us to interculturality.

The other temptation mentioned comes from the extreme opposite, which we have called *multiculturalism*. We have already said that multiculturalism is impossible. Acknowledging the primordial function of each culture, which consists in offering a vision of reality that allows Man to live his life, we could maybe defend an atomized and separated *pluriculturalism*, that is, a separate and respectful existence between diverse cultures, each in its own world. We would thus have the *existence* of a plurality of cultures without mutual connection. But what is obviously impossible is the *coexistence* of their fundamental diversity in today's world.

One cannot put forward that acknowledging this incompatibility already supposes a supracultural or universal logic. For such an incompatibility can be justified within the respective categories of diverse cultures. For example, for a culture such as the Western one, it appears obvious that there can be no life in common possible with a culture that believes that spirits constantly and freely interfere in human actions, without consideration for what is called physical or psychological laws.

Also from the point of view of other cultures, it is obvious that there is incompatibility, not so much because there is formal contradiction, but because there is a *de facto* incompatibility. The theoretical justification would then be, for example, not that A is incompatible with B because B is equiparable to non-A, but because A is simply greater than B and phagocytizes B.

In no way are we denying that there can be a transcultural validity of certain formal ways of thinking. Let us not forget that every universality is formal and that formality presupposes certain axioms (precisely formal ones) that are postulated or acknowledged. Thus, for example, the principle of noncontradiction that applies when affirming the incompatibility between A and non-A presupposes that A remains constant both in time and in my thought, that non-A as negation of A corresponds to it-is-not-A, and mostly that my thought of A and of non-A corresponds to the extramental reality of A and of non-A, and so on—presuppositions that need not be recognized by all cultures.

Moreover, multiculturalism today is also *de facto* impossible. The dominant culture has already penetrated foreign territories to such an extent that it would be myopic not to see it. Technocracy, to say it in a word, has practically penetrated the four directions of the earth. We may have to surmount or dominate it, but we cannot ignore its ubiquity. Maybe it is destined to become the unique culture that will replace all others, but this does not mean that it is a super-Culture encompassing all others.

In that context, we have, to this point, said two things: that monoculturalism is lethal and multiculturalism is impossible. Interculturality recognizes both assertions and seeks a middle way. Monoculturalism asphyxiates other cultures through oppression. Multiculturalism leads us to a war of cultures (with the foreseeable routing of the weakest) or condemns us to a cultural apartheid that also, in the long run, becomes stifling.

We have taken the position that cultures are mutually incompatible, but in no way have we said that they are incomunicable. The fact that the circumference and the radius are mutually incommensurable (we could have said it in a more poetic and Platonic way, of the lyre and of the bow) in no way means that they do not condition each other, nor that they can become separate.

We could even expand the metaphor and add that, just as there is no circumference without a radius, there is no culture without interculturality, at least implicit. Every circumference has its radius even if the latter is not outlined. No culture can remain static without destroying itself. A culture is nothing but an abstraction if it is not concretely embedded in human beings who cultivate and live it, and thus modify and transform it without following logical laws. A certain discipline called by the modern name of *Begriffsgeschichte* or *History of Ideas* has inclined us to believe that, except for certain modifications of paradigm, cultural transformations follow roughly the laws of deduction or of induction—as if they were computers. Human reality does not exhaust itself in history, nor human history in the history of ideas—may Hegel forgive us! One thing is the condition of possibility for a particular cultural stream to emerge, and the necessary plausibility for that stream to find root and to grow; another thing is to limit human freedom, the activity of the mind and the creativity of men to these simple intellectual operations. A man is not a machine, anymore than thinking is mere calculus.

This means that interculturality is inherent to the human being and that a unique culture is as incomprehensible and impossible as a single universal language and as one man alone. All cultures are the result of a continuous mutual fecundation. The dream of the Tower of Babel is the great temptation of the powerful, of the "entrepreneurs" (of works—all kinds) and of those who inhabit the higher mansions. The human condition is made up of more or less comfortable huts, but within human scale and with practicable pathways (not highways) between them.

The example of language is an eloquent one. One only has to live in Australia, in India, or in the USA to become aware of the variations and variants of the English language. Suffice it to move across Peru, Bolivia, or Mexico to understand that Spanish is an abstraction and that living languages are always dialects, at least the spoken languages—for example, the academic dialect.

To think that cultures are incomunicable because they are incommensurable is a rationalistic presupposition that believes that only a common *ratio mensurabilis* can be the instrument of human communication. To understand ("*s'entendre*") each other does not mean to comprehend each other ("*se comprendre*"). Intelligibility is not the same thing as awareness (*avoir conscience*). One can be aware of something that is unintelligible, as we have said. The fact of having separated wisdom into knowledge (without love) on one hand, and love (with knowledge), on the other hand, has fragmented the human being.

Interculturality is the complete form of human culture. But interculturality means neither one (single) culture, nor a disconnected plurality. Here again emerges the necessity of surmounting monism without fading into dualism: *advaita*. Intercultural communication presents a special "problematique." This will be the aim of our next chapter.

# 3

## "PROBLEMATIQUE"

Our topic will be met only partially since we are not trying to elaborate an intercultural philosophy but only to describe from outside this *terra nullius* (no-man's-land), by opening windows and doors in an attempt to communicate.

For that purpose, we can formulate the following considerations.

### **The Transformative Function of Philosophy**

The purely formal description of philosophy, as being that human activity that deals in a practical and/or theoretical fashion with the ultimate problems of which Man is aware, allows us to assert that it is its mission to overcome the possible (and real) inertia (physical and mostly mental) of Man, who, ensconced more or less comfortably in his culture, doesn't try to look beyond his own myth.

Assuredly, each culture offers to philosophy the language that the latter needs to formulate its insights. But it is no less certain that each philosophy tries to question the very foundations on which each culture is based: it is philosophy that investigates the ultimate content of the more or less explicit cosmovision of each culture. We have already indicated that a specific difference of philosophy with respect to other "disciplines" consists in looking back rather than ahead, in questioning what holds a culture together instead of hurrying up to scale a (cultural) edifice in construction. In that sense, philosophy is authentic *skepsis*, revolutionary, protesting, and transforming.

In other words, each philosophy emerges from the womb of a culture, and simultaneously, by questioning what holds that culture together, can transform it. In fact, every deep cultural change has emerged from philosophical activity. It has repeatedly been said that philosophers, although with chronological time lags, are those who influence the most the destinies of history. This radical character of philosophy means that it takes its nourishment from a subsoil where other cultures also take their roots. By that I mean that the stimulus of philosophical thinking comes from its underground contact with other roots. Or if we were to radically change metaphor, will be transcultural to what carries faraway seeds and lets them fall into the philosopher's cogitation (without forgetting the irony and humor hidden in that cogitation—a philosophy without humor loses the *humus* that keeps it vigorous and stops it from wilting into fanaticism). By trying to be aware of its myth, philosophy opens itself up to interculturality in order to accomplish its task of transmythicization, thus transforming the original culture's vision of reality.

This transformation takes place, although at velocities that can be very different within both cultures in question. The authentic meeting between cultures does not necessarily take place midway, but certainly outside the respective field of either. Otherwise, there would not be meeting but phagocytosis or rejection. I insist on this point because the skirmishes

(generally economic and political, even military) of certain cultures in foreign fields are not examples of interculturality but of domination.

Each philosophy is a human effort to move out of its own myth, an attempt to move out of the horizon of one's own world, as represented in miniatures of the late Renaissance, which show Man piercing the heavens and glimpsing into an infinite universe that was then starting to dawn before his very eyes. Every philosophy, by approaching the *mythos* with *logos*, exercises a demythologizing function, although it otherwise necessarily remythologizes, as I have said. One cannot separate the *logos* from myth or the myth from *logos*.

Let us summarize a very complex situation. One receives this incitement to philosophize, as much from the avatars of one's own culture as from the stimuli that come from foreign cultures.

### Interculturalization

The contemporary effervescence within the dominating culture has sparked a series of efforts to try to move out of this culture's apparent dead end.

The present culture, preoccupied by the growing specialization of knowledge, has begun to cultivate, especially among academics, what has been called pluri-disciplinarity. The latter consists in approaching a problem belonging to a given discipline with the help of the methods of other disciplines, although the problem continues to belong to the original discipline. It is as if one were calling upon mates to jump aboard one's ship and help one avoid shipwreck.

Another effort consists in a methodological transfer, that is, in applying the method belonging to one discipline to another discipline. This has been called *interdisciplinarity*. Here one does not ask others to come and help us, but we go over to their ship, or at least we want to navigate together. Obviously, for a method to work, it has to abide by and be more or less homogeneous with the object under investigation. One can only help us if we are experts in the functioning of our own ship. Thus the mathematical method can apply to physics, but it would not be adequate to apply it to theology, for example. In other words, *interdisciplinarity* can only apply to homogeneous disciplines.

More recently, some have introduced the term *transdisciplinarity* to designate a method that claims to go beyond the barriers of discipline. When neither the oars nor the sails of our boat are of use on the river, we ask people somewhere to throw us some ropes, to pull us from the shore, maybe in order to navigate upstream. This method wishes to confront the most diverse disciplines and approach a plural intelligibility of the complexity of human phenomena.<sup>1</sup> One must navigate on the water and move on earth. But both the fact of starting from the existing disciplines within the contemporary culture, and the requirement that the methods used should be dependent on those disciplines, result in that one does not go beyond the culture in which these disciplines have their *raison d'être*. The sailors in the boat and the haulers on the embankments both try to have us go up the ever-same river.

Transdisciplinarity represents a decisive step toward interculturality, but one is still within disciplines that claim to be universal and belong to a particular culture. One is still within the syndrome of globalization just as the *studium generale* a few centuries ago believed in the unique *ars magna*, which claimed to be able to be the foundation of a true *universitas*, by unifying all knowledge. The challenge of interculturality is more disconcerting and must

<sup>1</sup> See the interesting book by B. Nicolescu, *La transdisciplinarité* (Monaco: Rocher, 1996), which inaugurated a whole movement, and which has published a collective manifesto (at Arrahida, 1994) on transdisciplinarity.

hence be more humble and not claim to displace transdisciplinarity but situate it and relativize it. The question will then be asked: What is appropriate? *Universitas* or rather *pluriversitas*?

In another order of things, one speaks of *inculturation*. Two great examples: Christianity and modern science with its technology. The initial presupposition is, obviously, that these living great historical facts of mankind are supracultural, and that they therefore have the possibility and even the right to inculcate in the different cultures of mankind, without thereby bringing them to lose their identity.

After all that we have said, it should be clear that, unless one is defending a reductionist conception of culture, no human phenomenon can aspire to be supracultural. This does not prevent values or cosmovisions that, born in a particular culture, may be adopted or accepted by others. I am not denying that there may be and must be relatively transcultural values, but this is not synonymous with *transculturality*. In that respect one can rather speak of *interculturation* or of *mutual fecundation*.

I have insisted on the polysemy of words, and I myself have used this word as a possible reinterpretation of inculcation in the present Christian reflection.<sup>2</sup> In our intercultural context, that word could also serve as symbol of the middle way mentioned above, between cultural solipsism and imperialistic globalization.

Another word, polysemic also, which could help us, would be *pluralism*. In both cases, it is a matter of not cutting off potential human communication, without having to reduce them to a common denominator of a unique reason.<sup>3</sup>

It may be appropriate on this occasion to express some considerations, which we shall reduce to three, on what could be called a methodic of interculturality. Let us first set the main "problematique."

The "methodic" belonging to interculturality cannot be one that is followed in interpreting and comparing texts, nor can it be a hermeneutic of contexts. To interpret a text, one is required to know how to read and to know the pretext that made it possible. The adequate hermeneutics for such an enterprise is one that I have allowed myself to call diatopical. The *topoi*, or cultural sites, are distinct, and one cannot presuppose a priori that the intentionalities that have made it possible for these different contexts to emerge are equal. However, with the necessary caveats of a diatopical hermeneutics, contexts can be put into relationship and thus one achieves a certain understanding of these contexts.

However, as previously said, cultures cannot be reduced to contexts that house different texts and give them meaning. Texts can give distinct answers to a problem. It is the contexts that present a problem for us, but it is not legitimate to suppose that the problems of the different cultures are the same (only with different answers). The questions themselves are different.

<sup>2</sup> With respect to Christianity, which offers us a good example but which I cannot deal with here, see the contributions of the Indian Theological Association, little known outside its milieu (while noting its maturity in the course of time): S. B. Chethimattan (ed.), *Unique and Universal: Fundamental Problems of an Indian Theology* (Bangalore: Dharmaram College, 1972); J. Pathrapakal, ed., *Service and Salvation* (Bangalore: TP, 1973); M. Amaladoss and T. John Gispert-Sauch (eds.), *Theologizing in India*, TP, Bangalore, 1981; G. Van Leeuwen (ed.), *Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology* (Bangalore: Ate, 1984); K. Pathil (ed.), *Sociocultural Analysis in Theologizing* (Bangalore: ITA, 1987); K. Pathil (ed.), *Religious Pluralism: An Indian Christian Perspective* (Delhi: ISPCK).

<sup>3</sup> Sorry not to be more explicit on the theme of pluralism inherent to interculturality, which I have treated at length and repeatedly on other occasions. See, for example, *Invisible Harmony* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), and J. Prabhu (ed.), *The Intercultural Challenge of Panikkar* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

Nevertheless, as we have said, human communication is not impossible because Man is much more (not less) than reason and will. The text is run by reason, the context by will. But the human texture is anterior to both the text and the context, and it is the fruit neither of reason nor of will. It is given to us, it is a gift, we find it, we acknowledge it, we accept it or rebel against it, but it is there as *materia prima* that some will call divine, God, or in some other way. It is sufficient for us to acknowledge that the ultimate priority belongs to the given, to the gift, to what we receive or believe that we receive.

From that perspective, interculturality is also a given. And while each one of us, from within, is seeking to encompass or to situate other cultures, at least formally, we cannot but acknowledge that the instruments we hold to come closer to other cultures, come to us, forged by the culture in which we are living. There is in Man a feminine dimension that has been too much ignored in the majority of philosophical reflections.

a. The first consideration, after that general reflection, is not very popular in the mainstream culture: the field of interculturality does not belong to the will; it escapes it and is found beyond the will to be able to, to know, and to seek.

Authentic interculturation is not the inculcation of a culture that considers itself superior, or as having the duty to inculcate, to save, to colonize, to civilize. . . . It is a spontaneous fruit of the human condition, a natural result of Man's life on this planet, a *hieros gamos*, if we wish to abuse a certain mythology in which the Gods pull the strings of the elective affinities and avatars of history. The healthy relations between cultures, those that seek no sort of conquest, belong to the very dynamism of the "yin/yang" of reality, to the "*commercium*" between the divine and the human, as attested by history itself.

Hence the necessity of a pure heart—although, by pronouncing the word "necessity," we already introduce the great temptation of wanting to direct and even to manipulate it, in order to realize our "good intentions," so often justified under cover of divine Will (interpreted by us, inevitably). Moreover, wanting to possess a pure heart already soils it, to desire nirvana is the greatest obstacle to its attainment, or to think in advance how we are going to witness to the spirit makes us lose not only credibility but the very power (purity, grace) of the Spirit.

In a word, the methodic of interculturality is not voluntary, but simply natural.

b. Interculturality also shies away from the hold of the intellect (its apprehension, comprehension, grasp, "*begreifen*"); interculturality is not of the domain of reason. Reason can *only* operate from its own field, and from the particular field of a given space and time. "Sociology of Knowledge" also includes a History and Geography of Knowledge. Our intelligence is embedded in time and space and cannot function outside of them and outside of very particular spaces and times. It is appropriate to mention here, if only parenthetically, that even the cultures that we geographically experience as borderline are not contemporary but diachronical. Each has its own space and lives in its respective time. Neither the clock nor the sun are the masters of human time, any more than Newton or Einstein are those who have discovered space.

It follows that reason, which is always our reason, is not the competent judge for the *negotium* of interculturality. A first consequence of this is that what is called comparative philosophy is a pure impossibility and a leftover from that imperial and colonialistic past that the intercultural discourse obliges us to mention more than once. The basis for this is very simple. For an authentically comparative philosophy, we would need a fulcrum that is neutral, impartial, and hence external to philosophy. Now, by definition, such does not exist.

Philosophy, as we would like to define it, is characterized by the claim of not admitting a superior authority that orders or dominates it. That authority would then be the authentic philosophy. It is significant in this respect to remind oneself that comparative studies have emerged when the goddess Reason reigned in monarchical and despotic fashion in Western culture. And nowadays, even if it is no longer absolute queen, it has not yet abdicated its throne of constitutional monarch—thus giving free rein to the struggle, especially political, for power, through the means of each one's instrumental reason.

Many years ago, I introduced the notion of “imparative” philosophy to situate more adequately our irrepressible aspiration to know the concrete human panorama as it presents itself to our intellect. We cannot compare, but we can and must learn (“*imparare*” from High Latin) from the wisdom of other philosophies and cultures, and hence criticize.<sup>4</sup>

In a word, reason does not have the mission of governing (Man), but the function of policing. Reason that reigns with much honor in more than one culture cannot autoconsecrate itself the monarch of all cultures. But the alternative is not chaos.

c. The alternative, if we wish to name thus our effort to describe interculturality, must renounce neither reason nor will, but only surmount any idolatry. The median way opens up when we become aware of the function and power of myth next to the indispensable but not exclusive role of *logos* in Man. This is what I have called the *new innocence*.

From the outset—we suggest that the present mainstream culture had set its stakes on *logos* in all its dimensions, but had omitted to take the *mythos* into account, reducing the latter to being the Cinderella of the former.

My aim here is not to underline the importance of *mythos* nor give it back its role.<sup>5</sup> Let me just state that its function is essential for an intercultural philosophy.

### *Mythos and Logos*

Let us try to come to a certain conclusion. Cultures are plural. The plurality of cultures in this world does exist, not *only* in times past but also today. We have already criticized the mainstream culture's facile temptation to phagocytize them all, with the consolation of making them evolve toward a superior culture, without their *truly* losing anything. This is the modern syndrome of “conversion” according to the Christianity of the second half of this century, a syndrome that manifests itself even more crudely in the contemporary scientific mentality: nothing should be renounced, one must surmount and progress.

According to the vocabulary that we are using here, one could say that the plurality of cultures is a fact that is obvious to the *logos*; their pluralism is a myth, obviously for those who believe in it.

By pluralism, I mean that human attitude that, recognizing the contingency of everything that is human, and that Man is not only an object of knowledge but also a *knowing subject* (knower), acknowledges that systems of thinking and cultures exist that are mutually

<sup>4</sup> See my “Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of Religion,” *Man and World* (Boston: La Haye, 1980), XIII.3–4, 357–83; and “What Is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?,” G. Larson and E. Deutsch (eds.), *Interpreting across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 116–36.

<sup>5</sup> The bibliography is immense. May I signal, because of their importance, the two volumes (which comprise a vast bibliography) of Ll. Dürch, *Mite i Culture. Aproximacio a la logomitica I* (Barcelona: Montserrat Abadia, 1995), and *Mite i interpretacio. Aprimaciao a la logomitica II* (Barcelona: Montserrat Abadia, 1996).

incompatible and even contradictory, and that nevertheless Man does not have the capacity to pass absolute judgment. This does not mean abstaining from critique, nor from the obligation to oppose certain forms of culture that are considered to be noxious or erroneous from another culture's viewpoint.

But the nature of intercultural philosophy is not so much a question of dealing with borderline cases, or with decisions to be taken regarding aberrations, as of seeking paths of interculturality that, without aiming at building a new tower of Babel, do not renounce human communication. This means giving up the spiritual and material bulldozer, but not the human word, which is dialogue.

We have already said that interculturality is the locus of dialogue. What is lacking to reach cultural conviviality is dialogical dialogue, whose condition, among others, is mutual respect.

We say dialogical and not merely dialectical dialogue because the latter already presupposes the primacy of a *logos* (a very restricted one at that) that many cultures do not accept.

The dialogue between cultures requires not only mutual respect but also a minimum of mutual understanding, which is impossible without sympathy and love.

All this brings us to the re-valorization and maybe the transforming reinterpretation of a notion that, in spite of being very Hellenic, might be able to serve as a springboard to interculturality. We are obviously referring to the myth which is word, narration, which is conscious, which is not incompatible with *logos*, but which is irreducible to the latter. We cannot embrace reality, no matter how proteic our effort: neither the individual alone, nor one culture alone, nor Man isolated from the cosmos and the divine.

We cannot on the other hand, as men, renounce aspiring to the whole, we cannot settle for a part of the whole of which we are in some way conscious. And so the binomial *mythos-logos* seems to open the window for us unto that vision which, unsatisfied with the *pars pro toto*, becomes aware of that which (without dominating it) laughs, enjoys, lives . . . the *totum in parte*.

Interculturality continues to be a no-man's-land that we all can enjoy, provided we do not seek to possess it.



## SECTION XXIII

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL\*

From a cross-cultural perspective, the word "evil" in the title stands for any equivalent word one may choose: *mara, duhkha, asādhu, abhadra, pāpa, hamartia, ponēria, kakia, malum, rā'ah, iblis, sorrow, sin, hbel, Schlecht, Böse, Satan, Saturn, Serpent*. . . . I would like to condense my reflections in three chapters, each of which is going to have three further subsections. The *Mahābhārata* already said that three is the perfect number.

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\* "The Problem of Evil. Keynote Address," in Anand Amaladass (ed.), *The Problem of Evil: Essays on Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Chennai: Satya Nilayam Publications, 1997), 1-23.

## AN UNDENIABLE FACT

1. Whatever interpretations we may have of this problem, it appears obvious that evil is a fact. We may defend that it is real or not, and discuss about its nature, but evil stands there as a fact. It is difficult to define, and we can describe it only negatively. Thomas Aquinas, writing in the wake of St. Augustine (*malum non est nisi in bono*<sup>1</sup>), states that the subject of evil is always something good from which something due has been taken away. Being is good: *omne ens in actu, bonum quoddam est*<sup>2</sup> (*Sum. theol.*, I, q.48, a.3). Evil appears as a disturbance of *rta*, a disorder in the cosmic order, as something which should not be, which lacks being....

We describe it only negatively, but this negation cannot be an absolute one. It needs to negate *something*. This is a central point. Evil is the negation, or the opposite, of good—whatever this goodness may be. But it is not an absolute negation or the opposite of Being; it is not Non-Being, whatever this means.

2. But, second, it is impossible to whisk evil away. As a fact, it is a real fact, and we should beware of all those types of crypto-Platonisms which tell us that the *real* world is “another” one. This may also be true, but, be it metaphysically real or not, evil exists in *this* world of ours. This world may be a shadow and *māyā*; it is nevertheless a real shadow; it is in this world of *māyā* that the great part of humanity lives. In sum, evil is something that cannot be simply dispensed with. We may deny its cosmic and ontological status; we may reduce it to a moral or even a psychological factor; we may call it by different names, but in one way or another “evil” is there.

I daresay, speaking of the existence of evil, that those who have not had the experience of evil do not know it, they only think about it. Evil is not an abstraction. The *concept* of evil is not evil. This is a capital methodological remark that I cannot pursue further here. Evil needs to be experienced before becoming an object of thought. That epochal event that took place twenty-five centuries ago in the north of this country<sup>3</sup> was triggered by the experience of evil. This was what struck Buddha: the existence of *duḥkha*. This was his experience and, qua experience, it needs interpretation, but its *prima facie* existence cannot be simply dismissed: *sarva-duḥkham*, all is sorrow, disease, suffering.

There is even more. Evil does not only get neutralized, as it were, when we deal exclusively with the concept of evil. It also gets almost defeated when we speak about it. When we think about evil, we are generally biased: we are on the good side, we speak about the others, we are the thinkers, the survivors, the victors, the good guys, those who speak and think about

<sup>1</sup> Evil does only exist in good.

<sup>2</sup> Any actually existing thing is a certain good.

<sup>3</sup> India.

something which we have somewhat overcome by the very fact that we speak about it. This may not be the best methodology. The victims of evil are voiceless. If at all, they cry—or pray. Evil is ineffable and there is no possible hermeneutics of evil because what comes out of our scrutiny is no longer evil. It has lost its sting. The fortress of evil is impregnable to our reason, as I explain in the following section.

3. Third, evil is a *human invariant*. There is a distinction to be made between a human invariant and a cultural universal. Evil is human, although we may not like to call it humane, but it is a real human experience. In one way or another, sooner or later, all we human beings have had, deep down in the recesses of our psyche, the experience of evil in one or another of its manifold forms. It is a human invariant like eating, talking, thinking, or being sad or happy.

But it is not a *cultural universal* because our awareness of it, and much more our interpretation of it, depends already on our own culture. In point of fact, there are no cultural universals. Nothing is strictly universal, from a cultural point of view, because as soon as we speak of something, write, and even think about something, we are already part of the context that makes our statements intelligible and meaningful. When we say "evil," we have some consciousness of what we say, and this awareness is not only couched in a particular language but also tinged by our particular culture. We can distinguish, but not separate the ontic from the ontological.

This is my first point, which is simple enough: evil is a fact.

## AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE HUMAN FACT

1. My second point is that evil is incomprehensible as a human fact. Whatever evil may be, it contains a human factor. A stone is not evil, nor an earthquake, not even an *asura*. Our unjust throwing of the stone, the harm done to something related to Man, the action of an *asura*—according to our human criteria—may be said to be evil. Even a so-called objective evil is such because it is related to a subject for which the object is evil. When we speak of evil, we already incorporate it into our human language; it enters into our human horizon, and it belongs to our human world. But it comes into our human awareness precisely as something we cannot approve of, nor understand—perhaps because any “something” as such is already charged with positivity. *Quaecumque sunt bona sunt*, says the lapidary sentence of Augustine (*Confessions VII.18*).<sup>1</sup> I skip a commentary and even a translation. If we could succeed in explaining evil, we would explain it away.

Because of a horrible youth, an irresistible Oedipus complex, a paralyzing fear, an alcoholic father, the genes of the family, or what not, something has been committed which we all condemn and call evil. It is evil for the victims, but we cannot say that the doer as such is an evil person, or that he has committed an evil human act—he is not responsible. We may call the (objective) actions evil, but not the (subjective) act. Only when the action is incomprehensible we call it evil.

There have been scores of important efforts to explain evil. All of them deal with the causes of evil, the origin of evil, the culprit for evil, the evil one, and the like, but they seem to skip the central point: what is evil? To explain the origin, to know the causes is very helpful. But is *that* evil? We all know the qualms of all traditions to explain the nature of an intrinsically evil act. Most traditions look for a suitable cosmology, capable of harboring the fact of evil. Which is the place of evil in the world?

The problem is especially acute within the world of monotheism. The problem of evil becomes a double problem, a problem of Man and a problem of God.

“Si deus est, unde malum?” (If there is God, whence evil?) Boethius said, echoing Lucretius,<sup>2</sup> a man about whom scholars still discuss whether he was a Christian or not. The problem is classic: how can an omniscient, omnipotent, and good God allow all the suffering and injustices in the world? Either He is not omniscient, or not omnipotent, or not good.

Monotheism, like idealism but for a different reason, is almost bound to minimize evil. “After all, evil is not so bad,” “an occasion for a greater good” (for whom?), “a necessary condition for human freedom” (which is considered to be a greater good), “a secret of God,” and the like. This is generally said either by people who speak glibly of suffering, hatred, or the negative side of reality, or by those heroes who have triumphed over evil and have not

<sup>1</sup> “Whatever is, is good.”

<sup>2</sup> Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* I.4.

been crushed by it. Among the monotheistic religions, the most fascinating explanation, at least for me, lies in the Muslim theology of those poets linking the mystery of evil with the mystery of love. Iblis transgresses God's command (to pay homage to Man) out of love for the Creator. But it is not up to me now to decipher or to describe this.

We all know the importance of language, also in the Christian tradition. It was St. Jerome, when translating the *Creed* into Latin, who wrote *Deus omnipotens*. The earlier Greek texts said *Pantokrator*, which does not exactly mean omnipotent in a cosmological sense. The old Latin translations have still *omnia potens*, which is an anthropological prerogative, not a metaphysical attribute.

For clarity's sake I use the word "monotheism" to express the belief in a "personal God" endowed, although in an eminent manner, with the supreme features of the human person, that is, intelligence and will, while leaving open the question whether He also has sentiment. I use the word *theism* as the belief in a Supreme Being without further specifying its attributes, while *deism* is a historical designation of a particular conception of theism, stressing pure rationality, and belonging to the Western history of ideas of the last centuries.

Having said this, we now hurry to add that those three words (monotheism, theism, deism) have been used with an enormous flexibility, and that there are many philosophies within the three Abrahamic religions that purify, mainly apophytically, the notion of God so as to make room for a strongly qualified "monotheism"—mainly for historical reasons of fidelity to the monotheistic traditions of such religions. In any case, the problem of evil is paramount. And the difference is obvious when we compare those traditions with other religions of Asia, for which the theoretical problem of evil is less pungent.

2. Let us go a step further and venture a fundamental reflection. We have said that we cannot understand evil because evil is unintelligible. And yet, we are conscious of it. Evil is something about which we can talk and, in fact, thousands of books have been written about it—and it would be preposterous to affirm that it is all a pseudo-problem. There is in fact a fundamental distinction between consciousness (or better, awareness) and intelligibility. The field of our awareness is much larger than the field of our intelligibility. Our language is often ambiguous. We often say that "we understand that we do not understand," meaning that we are aware that we do not understand (but without understanding the non-understanding, which would amount to contradiction, if we used the words univocally). We are aware of evil without, for that matter, understanding it.

Here lies the problem of an omniscient God. This may be perhaps an attribute of God, but it is not necessarily an attribute of reality. Unless we presuppose that all reality is knowable, we cannot say that the omniscient Being knows the whole reality. It would be a *petitio principii*. An omniscient Being, by hypothesis, knows all, that is, all that is knowable, but not All (the whole of reality), unless we presuppose that the whole of reality is knowable.

We have surreptitiously digested the assumption that reality *has* to be intelligible, knowable. This is the heritage of Parmenides in the Western world, but reality may have an opaque side even to an omniscient supreme Being. It is indeed a challenge to our intelligence. We are conscious of darkness, but we cannot see darkness. If I take a torch and look for darkness, I will not find it, but if I do not have a torch, how shall I see the darkness? Darkness reveals itself by being invisible. In other words, translating the metaphor: evil reveals itself by not being transparent to the intellect. Evil has a revelatory character: it reveals an aspect of reality that we do not like, do not approve of, and do not even understand. It reveals something we cannot understand, something that not even an omniscient God can understand. Otherwise, we should say that for God there is no evil. Perhaps this is the so-called divine mercy: God forgives all because He

understands everything. Evil disappears. "If people knew how wretched you are, people would not come and venerate you as a saint," said God to a famous Sufi. "If people knew how merciful You are, people would no longer come and worship You," answered the Sufi.

However this may be, evil reveals, at least for us, an opaque aspect of reality; it offers the background, as it were, against which the good appears—and the other way round, as well. The good appears as good because we discover in it the absence of evil. Appearance is such because it is the appearance of reality. We are conscious of the *vyāvahārika*, matter, time, and the like, because we are somewhat aware of the *pāramārthika*, the spirit, eternity. . . . We would not speak about evil if we were not conscious of it, and we would not be conscious of it if we did not have a point of reference different from evil. This explains why in many human traditions the dialectic between Being and Non-Being is closely related to our issue.

Evil may have a low degree of existence, be just a deformation of Being, or of the Good, or what not, but we are aware of it, and our awareness is a real awareness of that aspect of reality. *Vedāntic* philosophy tells us that the ultimate place of *avidyā* is *brahman*. This awareness does not reveal light, it reveals that darkness exists, that shadow is a certain type of reality, that the negative, nontransparent, opaque aspect of reality cannot be dismissed so lightly as simply nonexistent. All this represents a tremendous challenge to our present-day dominating culture, which abides by the primacy of reason. It challenges the principle of "sufficient reason": it opens the way perhaps to a truly spiritual philosophy—or may we use the word "mystical"? Evil is that which does not obey the principle of "sufficient reason."

But I will not discuss words. Suffice the warning that we should not confine ourselves in ivory towers of reason, or fortresses of any type of ideologies keeping us away from the world as it appears to a majority of mortals—even if we should not limit ourselves to that universe. Śaṅkara knows that the elephant running against him is mere *māyā*, but he escapes from the animal's fury, since the elephant may not know that the figure in front of him is also *māyā*. . . .

I am conscious that I am performing an alchemical transformation by interpreting the human experience of evil as a positive revelation of an aspect of reality that otherwise would remain closed to our mind. This does not mean that evil ceases to be evil. This means that the human condition entails not only evil but also the intrinsic urge to transcend evil, to redeem it, if I may say so. Evil is a revelation and a challenge.

3. My third point is to strengthen what I have just sketched by mentioning some of the innumerable theories about the origin(s), cause(s), and place(s) of evil. In one way or another, they try to situate the role of evil in our human life—and ultimately to "justify" it by so doing. I am going to enumerate nine theories, and just enumerate them, because I will not enter the "private rooms" of the different traditions. Here are some of these explanations.

a. *Privatio*. If I have only three fingers, something is lacking in me. If a cow has not five fingers, is there something lacking in the cow? We need to know the nature of Man and of the cow. This knowledge is what enables us to say whether something is lacking or not. Let us make a delicate example of today's ethics in a world dominated by techno-science: is euthanasia a *privatio* (of the prolongation of human life) or a liberation (from human suffering)?

b. Another theory presents *avidyā* as the cause of evil. But what is this ignorance? The torturer knows all too well what he is doing; a person who hates also knows that hatred is something wrong, but goes on hating. We may teach the evil-doer that the action is evil, but, even if we teach him, will he be convinced? In some cases, ignorance may even function as an excuse. I killed a man in the dark, imagining it was an animal. To be sure, *avidyā* stands not

just for any kind of ignorance, but for the lack of knowledge of our true nature, and thus of reality. Saying, "There is *avidyā*," amounts then to saying that there is sin.

c. Another view is *nihilism*: the very nature of reality is absurd: the whole thing is evil. This would be the reverse of so many sentences of the theistic view: being is goodness, and so on. But if we do not have some capacity for distinguishing evil from goodness, then everything is evil or good alike. Nihilism is a one-sided monistic interpretation, a kind of absolute monotheism upside down.

d. The fourth type, making a caricature of it, is the *eschatological* explanation. Now, this "vale of tears," *duḥkha*, original sin, existence, . . . is dominated by evil, but later on, or at the end, all will be well. Everything is a "divine comedy," and our human tragedies will have a happy ending. *Ananda* is the ultimate resort; time is short, but, at the end, at least for those who "make it" in one or innumerable existences, all will end happily. I am not discussing, but only stressing that *meanwhile* all is not well, and this "*meanwhile*" is powerful and long. We have used a Greek word that may have Christian connotations, but I would include in the *eschaton* not only a historical end but also an ontological transcendence, and even an apophatic *nirvāṇa*. Evil is for the time being, for being in time. The great temptation here lies in minimizing evil because we are the winners, the victors, and not the victims.

e. Another type is *ontological dualism*. Evil is the counterpart of goodness. Evil has the same ontological status as goodness. The name of Zoroastrianism, in spite of the fact that this religion is more complex as it is commonly taken to be, may suffice. If we go on looking for a cause for evil, we may not stop until we reach an ultimate cause—and this is precisely the ontological dualism.

f. Another one is *Neoplatonism*, whose main exponent is Plotinus. The third *hypostasis*, the psyche, on the one hand is divine (and thus there is no evil in it) because it is linked with the second one (the *nous*), but on the other hand it is also linked with matter (*to eschaton*), and in this mixture evil appears.

g. Another hypothesis is what could be called the *anthropological autonomy*. The *Purāṇāñirū* (192) affirms that "good and evil do not come from others," like the English verse, "We are betray'd by what is false within" (Meredith), or the Greek insight that "all that injures issues from within" (Menander), and similar wise sayings. When we see evil, something is wrong within us. We could also quote the Gospels.<sup>3</sup> This attitude puts all the burden onto us, and it is indeed a burden.

h. The eighth hypothesis would be the *pragmatic attitude*, which is neither concerned with knowing what is evil or with fighting it, but simply with minimizing evil as much as possible, knowing well that we are a mixture of both good and evil.

i. The ninth attempt at giving an answer would be to recognize that there is an *opaque aspect of reality* that belongs equally to the Real. Evil would then be real, but not on an equal footing with goodness. I would link it with an *advaitic* vision.

These are all very important attempts that, along with many others, try to reflect on the problem of evil. We may have noticed, however, a double feature. None of these hypotheses penetrates into the nature of evil, as it is the case with any ultimate reality. All of them have to resort to an underlying worldview or cosmology that sets the problem without solving it. Evil is indeed a mystery.

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<sup>3</sup> E.g., Mt 15:10–20.

## 3

## HOW TO DEAL WITH EVIL

Let us turn now to the third part, less academic and yet equally if not more important—and more directed to all of us.

Evil is an undeniable and incomprehensible fact, which scores of theories try to explore by reverting to the origin and causes of it. Let us forget this for a moment. I am not saying that we can do without metaphysics. But there is another aspect, and perhaps the most important, or at least the most urgent aspect that very often we neglect. When we reflect on evil, we tend to elaborate on the theory that is most congenial to us. I would like now to put all theories aside and, inspired perhaps by Buddha, ask a simple question that any child would understand.

The question is this: *How can we deal with evil?* How do we, *hic et nunc*, here and now, deal with the evil we detect in and around us? This is a question that we cannot escape—also because any escapism is not neutral and may contribute to the very increase of evil. Even God takes sides, the "theology of liberation" rightly reminds us.

This is a question that perhaps transcends all our explanations. Any theory may be a consolation, which leaves us more or less satisfied because we deem to know what evil is, but we cannot sever theory from praxis—nor vice versa. The burning question is: how do we deal with *concrete* evil? This "how" cannot be the conclusion of a syllogism. It would still lack power to lead us to a congruent praxis. And here is where all the usual dichotomies are of no avail: the intellect here, my heart there, morality on the one hand, business on the other, and so on. All our fragmented explanations are perhaps very useful, but will I do therefore the right thing? How do I deal with evil? Closing my eyes? Working more and better, so that I need not bother for anything? Climbing to the top of the mountain and then discovering that evil is also there? Can we really escape from evil just by trying to understand it? Or have we not to face the question from an existential point of view? I may underscore here that, whereas thinking leads to a certain clarity of ideas, contemplation leads to action.

I make, again, three reflections.

1. First of all we should do so *without malice*—simply without malice. It means no dialectics: no victory over evil with a counter-evil. No hydrogen bomb against an atomic bomb. We should not meet evil with evil. We should deal with it without malice. Santideva says, "You get rewarded, when you face evil well." The first thing we obtain when we become furious against somebody is to have two irritated persons facing each other.

The dialectical approach I am criticizing consists in opposing non-A to A, in fighting evil with the same methods, using the same arms but "shooting" in the opposite direction. Conflicts and wars offer us the most blatant examples.

This dialectical mood has been prevalent in the political life of the past millennia. It is manifested in the rudimentary way of dealing with evil that goes under the venerable name

of justice—"just us," as it is pronounced by a Vietnamese friend of mine, who writes it as "just Us." Joking apart, I am referring to the hydraulic or at best mechanistic way of thinking: the causality of the billiard balls. This interpretation of justice, still prevalent today, aspires at reestablishing the balance that the culprit has broken by hitting in the other direction. We ask for repayment, betraying an entire ideology—as if one could pay for a lost life.

I am not saying that a society should not defend itself, or that no national or international order should be kept. I am only stressing that the end does not justify the means, because to treat anything as a means is already an evil in itself. I am criticizing the instrumental way of thinking and living as if the real universe were a world of means. This is a terrifying aspect of the techno-scientific worldview: the mechanical way of thinking (action and reaction), the laws of the movement of masses applied to any psychic, human, and spiritual dynamism, and so on. We deal with evil trying to counterbalance it by reestablishing the lost order, repaying the debt, punishing the committed evil.

This means, politically, that we take the *status quo ante* as a just system that we have to restore when someone has deformed it—all mechanical images, by the way. There is an alarming temptation of calling "terrorists" all those who do not accept the *status quo*. Terrorism is not this. Terrorism entails the use of violence, be it institutionalized or let loose. And violence is not the use of force, but the violation of the dignity of the person—and I would be ready to extend the notion up to the violation of the dignity of any being (*quod deceat omni creatura*).

My point is different: to deal with evil without malice requires, ultimately, to overcome the belief in the dialectical structure of reality. This attitude amounts to being ready for a historical mutation after the last six thousand years. This is the challenging *kairos* of our times, as I have been defending throughout my life. The alternative is mutual self-destruction.

My proposal is this. *Reconciliation*, and not that sort of *iustitia* as a defense of *ius* (or *lex*), is the proper manner to deal with evil. The very word "reconciliation" suggests a council, a calling to the other, in order to start a dialogical (not dialectical) dialogue. Only reconciliation, leading eventually to forgiveness, breaks the law of *karman*.

The consequences are tremendous; I mention only one. The *ius puniendi*, the right to punish that has been accepted for millennia as a just right, is incompatible with our present view of reality and the establishment of true justice. We have the right, and probably also the duty, of defending ourselves on a personal as well as a social level, but no authority on earth or in heaven can any longer pretend that to inflict pain on anyone has any corrective value. Pain, in short, has no redemptive value—and here I would call on Christian philosophers to rethink the entire theology of redemption. This entails an entire new worldview, into which I cannot now enter.

2. The difficulty in dealing with evil without malice does not lie in the fact that we are all selfish or wretched individuals. It is not a moral problem but a deeper one. And this is why I hinted at the need for a new epistemology, based on a new vision of the world. The difficulty is this: we said that evil, as such, is unintelligible, but we do not know how to deal with that which is incomprehensible. We are so convinced that reality is rational (or should be rational, according to human arrogance) that, when something cannot be understood, we do not know how to "bring it to reason," as we say.

We do not know how to deal with the incomprehensible because not only do we assume that everything has to be understandable, but we have also, and mainly, reduced humanity to rationality, and rationality to compliance with the laws of syllogism, thus developing an epistemology severed from any ontology which, in turn, has forgotten the intrinsic link

between knowledge and love. We want to be guided by reason . . . and the results are visible. Three world wars can be listed at the end of the twentieth century (from 1945 onward, there have been more war victims than in the two previous wars). Reason has a veto right in human affairs, but not the power to guide human life.

Coming to our point, reality is not obedient to reason and, when we meet something incomprehensible, we are at a loss. The most superficial way to deal with the problem is then to have one million prison inmates, as in the United States today. How to deal with the incomprehensible? That is a philosophical, and theological, problem. I spoke of awareness and intelligibility. It is written in the Gospels, which I am quoting only as an example, "Do not judge" (Mt 7:1; Lk 6:37). But if I happen to judge internally, even if I do not take part in any trial condemning someone, I may pretend not to judge, but I am in fact doing so.

Not to judge is really difficult. The Gospel sentence does not say not to have discernment, *viveka*. It says that we have to purify ourselves in such a way that we actually do not judge others, and much less condemn them. It calls upon a real transformation in our ways of thinking and living. We have been keeping on judging for the last six thousand years, and we are very good at that, at correcting and punishing. At this level, not to judge is as much an impossible command as the injunction to love. We cannot tell our mind not to condemn, if we think something is condemnable, nor force our heart to love if we feel something is not lovable.

Here is where the difficulty of dealing with the incomprehensible appears. Facing an act that we consider evil, how must we deal with it? I have mentioned that the mere criterion of rationality would not help. Reason universalizes—it leads from the particular to the universal, dealing with singular events as particular cases of a general scheme. Reason uses mostly concepts. The heart, on the contrary, particularizes and does not apply the law of deduction. A mother will see the crime of her son with different eyes than those of the magistrate. In both cases, however, a certain confidence in reality is needed. Confidence in the other, in reason, in the system, in God, Future, Progress, or whatever.

3. Something that is incomprehensible cannot be grasped by our intellect, but can be embraced by our heart. And this is our last point.

Love your enemies, says the Gospel; practice universal compassion, says the Buddha; be all of one spirit and in concord, sings the *Veda*; and in a similar vein speak most religious traditions of the world. No wonder that humanity has found those injunctions too hard and has taken refuge in casuistry and institutions, or simply disregarded those insights of wisdom.

Two general comments may be in place here. The first more theoretical, the second of a more practical nature.

Many philosophers would answer our criticism of reason by qualifying the function of reason: it has to be "clear" reason, and our rational faculty should not be obscured by private interests and passions. Fair enough, but this answer seems to ignore the problem, or rather the power of evil. We know of cold reason leading with clear thoughts to evil acts. Reason does not dispel evil.

Our last and more important comment refers to the fact that we have neglected the cultivation of a pure heart as the motor of our human acts. A clear reason may lead to evil acts; a pure heart will not. Some may retort that it is a mere tautology, because "pure" already means good. It may be so, but nevertheless the difference with reason stands. A "pure reason" may be pure as reason, and yet be evil. A pure heart is certainly a tautology. In the last analysis, all ultimate statements cannot but be qualified tautologies.

*God's message cannot be chained up.*

2 Tim 2:9

Friends and enemies of theology:

It is an honor to have the opportunity to critically present something that has represented a major point of concern throughout my life: death and resurrection of theology.<sup>1</sup>

I did not specify "enemies" as some kind of witticism, but rather because, often, it is by listening to one's enemies that one learns the most—in theology as well. Theology is lucky to have the enemies it does—if not to rise again, at least to revitalize itself. Contradiction, as the ancients already pointed out, not only incites intelligence, it also makes spirits mature.

Not long ago, some theologians declared the death of God. The latter, after the verdict, remains alive. God lives, but theology has died or, at least, it is expiring. It has no life. Not only statistically (it is no longer studied), but it is also absent from society. Theology has been expelled from the major centers of education, both in secondary education as well as in universities. Theology no longer interests us because it has become irrelevant for public life: it is no longer useful to "make a living"—to put it in a way that is doubly ironic because this saying has changed meaning and it no longer indicates forging one's own life in order to live it fully now and forever, but rather obtaining some money to have a more comfortable existence.

The great Muslim civilization—which is so misunderstood, so caricaturized and yet so deep, which for centuries spread across 60 percent of the Iberian Peninsula and which fertilized Christian thought from the tenth century on—is in shock (even if this is not how they express it) at seeing that the modern Western world has managed to create a civilization

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\* Text of the inaugural conference of the 2002–2003 school year at the Institut Superior de Ciències Religioses in Vic; published with the title "Mort i resurrecció de la Teologia," in *Textos* 14 (Vic: Institut Superior de Ciències Religioses, 2002). Translated from Catalan by Carla Ros.

<sup>1</sup> Spoken style is not the same as written style. I have tried to preserve the spontaneity of the former but have also allowed myself to insert sentences that clarify my own thought because I believe this topic to be sufficiently important. I have however decided not to include any quotes that would complicate the text. Out of respect to the diverse traditions, I have preserved the original spelling of proper names.

(I am not saying a culture) that can afford the luxury of being tolerant because, whether God exists or not, ultimately, everything remains exactly the same. The existence of God has become a superfluous hypothesis. Rail networks, politics, the economy, everything works the same, with or without God. We can afford the luxury of having some people confess to being believers while others do not, because it does not really matter.

The alternative is not, obviously, to kill each other because we do not think alike, but rather that we engage in a dialogue—and that through this dialogue we cultivate our spirit, which is how Cicero described philosophy: *cultura animi*. The time when common citizens became passionate about the fundamental problems of existence: God, the Trinity, the soul, happiness, the meaning of pain, is gone. Once, people got worked up about those issues, they discussed them, and they turned to and questioned those with deeper knowledge in order to be able to enjoy a fuller intellectual, spiritual, and even physical life. People then were neither better nor worse than they are nowadays, but it is a fact that, today, theological problems, issues about the destiny of Being and the meaning of life, metaphysical questions, in one word, do not seem to concern us much because we have no time to think about them; and common theological responses seem prefabricated and unconvincing to us. By saying this, I am not idealizing a time when theologians speculated splendidly on the Trinity and incarnation, for example, and yet forgot about the social justice of the gospel itself; but, after twenty centuries, we do not appear to have "progressed" much. Years ago, I wrote a note<sup>2</sup> that said that the so-called theology of liberation also implied liberation from theology—precisely so that it can rise again.

We have turned philosophy and theology into specialties on which perhaps the experts know something, but which the public at large can afford the luxury of ignoring. They are irrelevant. I am not referring to whether the churches are empty or not, or to whether people "practice" their faith, understanding by "practice" the fact of attending a series of worship rites. I am not concerned with the sociological point of view right now; rather I am merely pointing out that the fundamental problems of theology seem insignificant in our world. This is a fact, a certainty. We have not even given it a decent funeral—if I may be ironic—nor have we erected a mausoleum in the cemetery. We have marginalized theologians, and the few who are left are tolerated because they have no bearing in our lives. There are a few experts who claim to know theology; there are even institutes that profess to find it interesting, but for the majority of people, theology has died.

I do not mean to say, with all this, that we must long for the past, nor am I proposing a proliferation of faculties of theology. I have merely stated that theology is not a specialty, and therefore it cannot be confined to elitist classrooms. This is why the title contains a copulative and not a disjunctive conjunction: death *and* resurrection. Resurrection follows death. If life is not a constant resurrection, it is not properly human life—as St. Paul comes to tell us. If "I face death every day" (1 Cor 15:31), it is because I rise again every day.

I would like to develop this idea in three very simple points:

1. Addressing the certainty that the life of "theology," as it is commonly understood, is now vegetative, and that it is irrelevant for human life
2. Venturing a hypothesis on *why* this happens
3. Reflecting about its possible resurrection

<sup>2</sup> "Hacia una teología de la liberación," *Interculturalidad, diálogo religioso y liberación* (Pamplona: Verbo Divino, 2005). A talk held at the Fourth Parliament of the Religions in Barcelona in 2005, of which I was co-president.

1. After six millennia of human history, I believe we can come to the conclusion that the most efficient and realistic political system—the *Realpolitik*—is precisely the gospel. The rest of the systems have failed. Even though nowadays it is well known that the *Donatio Constantini* (by means of which the emperor Constantine gave Pope Sylvester I the *imperialis potestas* over the whole of the Roman Western world) was a full-fledged falsification of the eighth century, the mentality of the *Sacrum Imperium* still prevails, and this has affected theology. The *ministerium* (service) has turned into *magisterium* (authority).

Now then, the style of life—and therefore of political life—exemplified by the Sermon on the Mount has practically not been applied to public life. In the Gospel it is said and repeated that the smallest will be the greatest, and that the last will be the first. The Gospel also says, “I am sending you out like lambs among wolves” (Lk 10:3). I wonder if we have properly understood the meaning of this saying. What does it mean? Lambs with atomic bombs, supplied with “security” and “defense,” and pockets full of dollars? Frightened lambs that arm themselves more than lions? Lions, by the way, are strong and do not carry arms. Have we, perhaps, forgotten the eucharistic lesson of letting ourselves “be eaten” in order to bear fruit and thus give life to the world? There are paradoxes that, after twenty centuries, no longer appear to be so. Perhaps this is the only *Realpolitik*: to bring peace to the world and to consciousness. Bismarck used to say that one could not govern an empire with the Sermon on the Mount. However, we now know that without the Sermon on the Mount all empires collapse, including the imperial dictatorship that is now upon us. In the face of this situation, theology hardly even dares to open its mouth. More than hoarse, it is now mute.

In one word, theology is dead. This is also proven by the fact that it has no say whatsoever in the most important cultural phenomenon of the past centuries: modern science. At most, we can hear the voices of a morality that seemingly wants to slow down investigative passions for more or less pragmatic reasons. But theology is much more than morality—a morality, on the other hand, that convinces very few.

2. Next, the difficult thing is to venture a hypothesis on *why* theology has died. The history to which I have alluded is, in great part, responsible for this. It is usually said that the responsible party was the regime of Christianity, which, in our case, could be characterized as the confusion between evangelic *exousia* and Roman *potestas* and modern *power*. But as we are not in an institute of theology, I would like to venture a more theological hypothesis that is concomitant with historical reasons.

I quote here a famous Latin saying: *Philosophia ancilla theologiae* (Philosophy is the handmaiden of theology). Here we have an example of how the change of context modifies the meaning of a text. This expression first appeared during the Patristic Age as a symbol of the autonomy of the institutions of faith in the face of mythical and rational lucubrations. The myths and philosophies of so-called paganism were used by the church fathers to formulate the truths of Christianity by criticizing, adapting, and transforming them. Nuns, in the Roman Council of 721, are called *Dei ancillae*, the “handmaidens of God.” Later, with Peter Damian in the eleventh century, and in order to defend the traditional symbolic exegesis of Scripture in the face of the rationalist interpretation (*artis humanae peritia*), this purely rationalist expertise was called *ancilla*. Finally, when after Abelard the autonomy of rational dialectics began, this formula was used in the sense that it was given from the Middle Ages until Kant with his famous *Streit der Fakultäten* (fight of faculties).

As I have already repeated on numerous occasions, in order to correctly interpret a *text* we must know its *context*. This is the task of the historian. We cannot understand Christian

theology without knowing its Hebrew-Greek-Roman context. One of the collateral effects of having consigned the study of history and classical languages to oblivion is that the theology that is usually taught appears to be mummified, or to be made up of simple formulations fallen like manna from heaven—including the aberration of confusing revelation with its formulation; hence also what I have termed “the intercultural imperative” for world peace and the study of theology. A Christian text in an Asian context, for example, sounds very different from what it actually wanted to express.

Now then, in order to understand a text, we need something else. This is not stated very often, yet it is forgotten much more often. We must also *understand* the author's *pretext*—this is the task of the philosopher, if he is a true lover of wisdom. This “understanding” is of a different order than mere rational knowledge; it must include personal knowledge, which implies, among other things, love. The *pretext* of the Church Fathers was to lead the “pagan world” to comprehend and accept the gospel by speaking its same language. The *pretext* of the Middle Ages was controversy, and that of the Modern Age is to maintain power. In other words, a text has many readings.

My interpretation is limited to the use that we have made of the saying *philosophia ancilla theologiae* from Scholastic theology to the present day. Theology, against what the gospel taught, has wanted to rule, and by ruling it has discredited itself. It has wanted power, to be the *regina* (queen) of sciences and to control what these should say. It has mistaken authority with power. As the etymology implies, one who has *authority* is one who makes others grow, who makes confidence, love, comprehension, and tolerance grow: as the ancients used to say, *autoritas ab augendo*, “authority” comes from “making grow.” It is not power. Authority is given to us by others and it is recognized by them. I have the power given to me by my money, my weapons, or my physical strength, and these are reasons that others fear me. Theology, once a certain philosophy has been used, has wanted to be in charge, to be queen, to turn philosophy into its handmaiden—and because of this, it has become stagnant, if not dead.

Lao Tzu already said it before the gospel: he who truly has authority is in the last place, and then this authority is recognized. Theology has wanted to turn philosophy into a kind of servant. Even nowadays, in the faculties of theology, philosophy is introduced as a subject to pave the way for theology. Once we have been indoctrinated in this philosophy, which is not authentic philosophy because it is not free, they introduce us to theology. By making philosophy its servant, theology has fallen into its hands—so that without Aristotle, Plato, and so forth, there is no possible theology. Theology is forced to express itself by means of the forms presented in philosophy. The ancients also said: *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur* (Everything that is received is received according to the form of the receiver). This relates to another one of Lao Tzu's ideas, which exalts water by saying it is feminine and it takes the form of the container that contains it. It has no form of its own, it adapts to the form of the container, and when you let it run, it flows downward.

But this is not all. This domination of theology over philosophy not only distorts the former, it also degenerates the latter. Thus, for example, in order to defend the language of a council that uses the word “Persons” to refer to the Trinity, an entire and very peculiar concept of “person” is developed, more or less gratuitously; for the Greeks this term had a completely different meaning, not to mention for Asia. Languages are not neutral.

The situation is much more severe than it seems because, in the subsequent centuries, when Christianity came into contact with Eastern religions, it said—and it still maintains nowadays—that the great “scandal” and the great difference between itself and these religions lies in that it has a conception of a personal God whereas the latter conceive an impersonal

one. We are suffering from a theological misinterpretation that has historical consequences of the greatest magnitude. I repeat: theology is of vital importance for the life of all peoples.

We have become slaves to a theology that, because it wants to rule, has turned into the handmaiden of a philosophy that, in turn and wanting to serve its master, has also become stagnant. There is no possible theology without a philosophical base, but this base is already theological. What do "person," "God," "virtue," "wisdom," and "happiness" mean? We must explain this with words that emerge from an integral human experience, whether it be an experience of reason, faith, feeling, or whatever other source of knowledge—which does not eliminate the critical function of our faculties.

Now then, if I already have a preconceived notion of the meaning of "God," "truth," "grace," or "wisdom"—that is, an idea received from a certain, previous philosophy—then theology becomes the handmaiden of those molds through which it must necessarily express itself.

Nowadays philosophy has escaped from this guardianship. It walks alone and has ruptured its positive symbiosis with theology. Theology has thus been left without a base. Theology without philosophy is pure lucubration, when not superstition. Philosophy without theology is insignificant, when not boring. What is fundamental are people's vital problems, pain, life, death, the existence of something beyond what we can see with our eyes alone. All this, without theology, does not seem to work. The separation of philosophy and theology is lethal for both. They must be distinguished, but they cannot be separated. Their relationship is not dualistic, but rather *advaita*. It is debatable whether their divorce was produced by the ill treatment that philosophy received from theology, or because the former fell in love with the "daughters of men" (paraphrasing Gen 6:2) and let itself be blinded by the new, emerging sciences.

The fact is that mere reason as the ultimate criterion for truth had to be deified, and beliefs had to find refuge in a God made exclusively for their needs. Body and soul were separated and they both died. Paradoxically, here the soul is philosophy and the body is theology—its specific incarnation. An exclusively rational philosophy must coexist with the concept as the intellectual nucleus of the thing, insofar as its soul. An essentially incarnational theology, such as the Christian one, must coexist with the existential reality of the thing, insofar as its body—which tradition calls "the Body of Christ," still describing it as "Mystical." We then begin to discover that incarnation is not an accident within Christian theology itself. Despite all his theological lucubrations, St. John<sup>3</sup> does not say that God became Man, but rather that the *logos* became flesh—though the Hebrew word that corresponds to the Greek word *sark* (flesh) also has the connotation of "Man," and the Hebrew term (*dabar*) corresponding to Word (*logos*) also means "thing" and even "event."

I would like to make one further clarification. I have said that philosophy is the soul and theology the body. But not a Cartesian soul or an individual body. The soul is the life of reality, and because of this, it "can be everything," as Aristotle already said and the Scholastics repeated: *anima fit quodammodo omnia*. The body is the material reality. And this is how it was repeatedly maintained during the first fifteen Christian centuries, when it was affirmed that "the Body of Christ" is the Church. Rāmānuja also declared that the Body of God is the *real* world.

In any case, let us put aside these cultural reflections for another time and return to our topic, that is, that the Christian vocation—and, therefore, also that of theology—is to serve.

There is a historical fact from which more than one practical consequence for today's world could be drawn. I am referring to what happened in a large part of Europe after the

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<sup>3</sup> Jn 1:14.

post-Napoleonic Restoration. The fact that theology formed part of a university education was never for a moment in doubt; in effect, theology was the cofounder of all European universities. It was also never in doubt that religion formed the very nucleus of human life, which, insofar as conscious life, needed theology. It was the power, and not the authority, of the official Church of the time that wanted the exclusive rights for the teaching of theology. The universities accepted the situation as such, and the consequence was the divorce between an ecclesiastic theology and a university philosophy; a divorce between philosophy and theology that does not exist in Scandinavia, or even in Germany, where the faculty of theology is still the first. This separation has provoked the degeneration of both, of philosophy and also of theology. If we do not go to our vital sources to ask what life is and what the answers to human beings' fundamental questions are—if philosophy and theology do not address these human concerns, proper to "every person who comes to this world"—they lose their *raison d'être*.

This divorce between soul and body has caused the death of theology—not to mention philosophy. A theology that has not examined its foundation is not sustainable, and its base ends up tumbling. We need only go to the East to confirm this. In the West we are so narrow-minded that we have become trapped in our own molds, created more or less artificially (this is not meant, however, to be a eulogy of the East, which obviously presents its own problems).

In short, theology has wanted to be queen, and not only has it been dethroned, but in its exile it has also lost contact with reality; and when someone attempts to make it return, it rightly resists recognizing a constitution it has not signed. The Christian paradox that states that in order to "witness the truth" one must be a martyr, as the word itself indicates,<sup>4</sup> also applies here. We must die in order to rise again. And this is our third point.

3. In this third section, elemental and at times perhaps somewhat absurd in order to be more incisive, I would like to discuss the *resurrection of theology*.

Everything in life dies and is born again. It is interesting to note how the law of inertia, already formulated by Plato, has conditioned the Western way of thinking, despite Newton's brilliant *et hypotheses non fingo* (and I do not make up hypotheses). Perhaps we need an immersion in the Buddhist cultural world in order to discover that the impermanence of everything can lead us to see the resurrection of all things. The spirit makes everything new at every moment, and it renews the face of the earth, as is stated in the Psalms,<sup>5</sup> according to the liturgy of the Day of Pentecost. If my hypothesis is valid, that is, if philosophy and theology have died because of their separation, what we need is to reconcile the sacred marriage—*hieros gamos*, as the Greeks used to say—between philosophy and theology, so that they may both rise again, without losing their own *ontonony* because of it.

St. Bonaventure, whom I consider a friend even though he lived seven hundred years ago, did not recognize the divorce between theology and philosophy. I do not think that Aristotle will cease to be alive now, or that Jesus Christ is merely a historical memory, despite the fundamental distinctions between these examples. If we do not overcome history, how can we believe in the Eucharist, which is more than a simple remembrance of a historical fact? If we live only in the myth of the West—that is, history—our life becomes very sad. Life moves toward death and it is a "vale of tears." If we do not overcome history, we will always carry our mistakes around. If history is the only reality, once we have made a mistake

<sup>4</sup> See Jn 1:9 in the *Vulgata* version.

<sup>5</sup> The original meaning of the Greek word *martyr* was "witness."

<sup>6</sup> Ps 104:30.

there is no possible pardon; we may not be charged, or it may not be taken into account, but mere judicial remission is not ontological, sacramental, a type of pardon that constitutes a "de-creation," as I have tried to explain on other occasions—but this is not the issue now. The only thing I wish to point out here is that we must overcome the myth of history. Overcoming does not mean denying; rather we must stop identifying it with reality.

I remember an anecdote about a Christian missionary who, in the gardens of Vrindāvana, in northern India, where the legend of the Lord Kṛṣṇa takes place, said to one of his followers, "Our Christ is real, that is, historical. He lived two thousand years ago; we have documents to prove it. On the other hand, we know nothing of your Kṛṣṇa except for a legend, and it is not too edifying." The good Hindū was thrilled. He understood that Jesus was, like Napoleon or Francis of Assisi, a very important historical figure, but nothing more. For him, the Kṛṣṇa of his faith was the *real* one, the one who was valid. Whether or not he was, in fact, the son of Devaki and he had been mischievous was of little consequence. But I do not want to talk about intercultural comparisons now.

The resurrection of theology can only occur if its body and soul are reunited. Only then will we be able to find its spirit again. I was saying that St. Bonaventure had not yet recognized this divorce, even though St. Thomas had already accepted their separation de facto, though not de jure. Bonaventure spoke of one sole theology, in which he recognized a triple distinction. He distinguished between symbolic theology, theology properly speaking, and mystical theology. But the three constituted *one* theology, inseparable from philosophy. At that time it was customary to refer to the two great books of reality: the book of Nature and the book of Revelation. Both had to be read in the light that "descends from the Father of the lights" (James 1:17).

The thing is that, now, we do not know how to read, how to grasp the depth, the beauty, and the truth of the book of Nature, or even that of the book of Revelation<sup>7</sup>—which, without the first, is nevertheless unintelligible. We analyze and perform an autopsy on the book of Nature, turning it into a topic for specialists. But we do not know how to see it, to live it, and to enjoy it. Perhaps some artists do, but people in general do not know how to read; they are theologically illiterate. I have spent much time in India discreetly listening to people who could not read or write, who commented on the meaning of that strange figure hanging from "the branch of a tree" or sculpted in the great doors of a temple. And by interpreting and giving life to those artistic representations, they discovered unexpected meanings that went much further than what I had ever imagined.

Something similar has happened to us with the book of Revelation. We have carried out exegesis, analysis, autopsies, but often their symbolic meaning escapes us—and by "symbolic" I do not mean exclusively metaphoric. There is an essential difference between symbolic and conceptual knowledge. The latter attempts to be objective. The former transcends the subject/object dichotomy and demands participation. This is why traditional knowledge (be it Greek, Indian, Christian, etc.) requires an initiation for the vital incorporation in any doctrine. Dialectics (in the modern sense) is not valid here. Not everything is an issue for mere rational interpretation. As they say, "The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose," as he does during Jesus's temptations. Jesus then answers that people do not live by bread alone, but by every *word* that comes from the mouth of God—not by all the writing that comes from the hand of Man, no matter how inspired it is. I have repeated many times that Christianity is not a "religion of the Book" but of the Word—that it is only alive when it

<sup>7</sup> Here meaning the whole Bible, the whole of God's self-revelation indeed, not only the last part of the New Testament.

is spoken to, when it is listened to, and when it is understood. That is what resurrection is about: the living Word.

We have to know how to read the book of Nature and listen to the Word that nourishes "all the people who come to this world." This "word" is not "writing." Let us recall that, until the fifteenth century, we only spoke of *one* Testament, the Old one. The one we now call the New Testament used to be known as the "Christian Scriptures." In order to understand these, we need the gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, one gift is not on the list and without which we cannot elaborate a proper theology: irony—humor, if you wish. Taking things literally makes us fall into fundamentalism.

There is a text that has troubled me for years, and it took me a long time to understand it. The text is only found in Matthew (12:36). It makes reference to a term that is difficult to translate and that the *Vulgate* renders as *verbum otiosum*, "idle word." New versions usually translate it like this: "For every unfounded word people utter they will answer on Judgment Day; since it is by your words you will be justified, and by your words condemned." The Greek text says "for all *argon*" words; that is to say, for every word that has no energy, strength, that does not cause that which it says, that is not sacrament. For all empty, careless, *argon* words, for all these we will be asked to give an explanation. This is the word that complements bread, Jesus says.<sup>9</sup> Bread and Word resurrect theology.

In order to recover the meaning of "theology" (which is not a Christian monopoly, though I must limit myself to Christian theology, which is what concerns us here), I now turn to the quote by St. Paul, who literally says that "*theology* is not chained" (2 Tim 2:9). The context of the passage is different: Paul finds himself chained in prison and says that "the word of God cannot be chained"; it is free. Let us recall, however, that Thomas Aquinas himself tells us that any interpretation of the Scripture is perfectly legitimate if its literal sense is preserved. The thing is that, with the best intention, we have wanted to chain it, so that it does not escape our control. Theology—a word that Plato already used—can both mean the *logos* about God (objective genitive) and the *logos* of God (subjective genitive). The objective genitive, that is, to say things about God, believing that the concept touches the object (God), is blasphemy, since we turn God into an object of our thought. Gregory of Nyssa said that the worst idolatry was turning God into a concept. God is neither an object nor a concept. We can have a concept of things, but God is not a thing; He cannot be one more thing among the rest. There is no possible concept of God; what there is are doctrines that come close to the reality of the Mystery, of what we call God. Now then, we cannot speak of God in the same way that we speak of a dinosaur. We need a different discourse, since God is not one more thing among the rest. To fall into this trap is to lose Him completely; it means losing all of theology. St. Paul already said that "faith comes from listening,"<sup>10</sup> and we can only listen to the word of someone who speaks. This listening is an experience. Theology is founded on the experience of faith, as the most traditional theology already stated.

But that is not all. The subjective genitive also makes this clear for us: Word of God, and not only *about* God. Here lies the strength and the weakness of Christian theology. Christian theology, following the Prologue of the Gospel of John, says that in God there is *logos*, that God is Word, that this Word was *at* the beginning, but it is not *the* Beginning. The Word was God, and it was in God, and it is equal to God, but the text does not say that it was the Beginning. "In the Beginning was the Word." As St. Irenaeus offers in a lapidary

<sup>8</sup> From *a-ergon*, "without (any) work."

<sup>9</sup> See Mt 4:4.

<sup>10</sup> Rom 10:17.

saying, "From the Silence of the Father comes the Word of the Son." This Word can be heard in all words that are not idle, that come from the heart, that are sincere; in every word that a person of goodwill may utter.

And when are these words spoken? These words are spoken when knowledge and love have not been separated—which constitutes, as I have already mentioned, the great divorce of our current times—that is to say, when one does not believe that one can know without loving (which is calculating) or love without knowing (which is sentimentalism). This union between Knowledge (*logos*) and Love (*pneuma*, spirit) opens us up to the mystery of the Trinity. Faith emerges from knowing how to listen to this word. I have already said that Christianity is not a religion of the Book, but rather that it is a religion of the Word, "the Word that was since the Beginning."<sup>11</sup>

This is why the Holy Spirit, who, as the Scripture says,<sup>12</sup> has knowledge of every word, had the humor to make sure that hardly any of the words Jesus said were preserved. Everything is translation. Jesus spoke in a dialect, and his words were later translated into Greek, which is very different from Hebrew and Aramaic. We only know a few of his original sentences. One of them is from the end, when he is on the cross, and he unleashes that extraordinary cry. People did not understand him because he spoke in his dialect.<sup>13</sup> In my opinion, those words constitute one of the main revelations of his message (YHWH abandons him, but his Father does not); but this is not the issue now. The issue is that theology emerges from listening to the Word. Word is not writing, and even less translation.

Thomas Aquinas gives three reasons as to why divine Providence made sure that Jesus did not leave anything written. In the first place, because the best Master inscribes the word in the heart of his disciples. Second, because we would idolize the writing, thinking that there is nothing more sublime, believing it to be identical to the message. Third, because in order to communicate life, there must be a living messenger who speaks to us. The word must be listened to, and every word must have someone who transmits it, as He commanded it to his disciples.<sup>14</sup> There is no word if nobody listens to it. There is no word without a sound, without matter. In the word there is he who speaks, he who listens, the matter by means of which one speaks, and that which is said, the meaning. Knowing how to listen to the Word is the art of true theology—that is, symbolic intuition, knowledge (intellect), and mystical knowledge, as Bonaventure says. Without mysticism there is no theology.

"The spirit has knowledge (*gnósis*) of every word." If we lose this mystical, holistic, complete meaning of theology, and we turn it into a specialized science, then its death is understandable. Returning to the marriage between knowledge and love—between mind and heart—is another cultural imperative of our times.

We do not find ourselves in an era of change, but rather in the change of an era. A radical transformation is needed; otherwise, we are headed toward a catastrophe. Cataplasms and minor reforms that only prolong the agony of an intrinsically unfair system are not enough. If Christians, as soon as they begin to glimpse this Mystery, do not live fully in it (which is revealed in every authentic word), then they also become responsible for the situation in which we find ourselves. If we live inside ivory towers, stagnant in our meaningless brawls, how can we dare to speak of a God who "sends down rain to fall on the just and the unjust and

<sup>11</sup> See 1 Jn 1:1–2.

<sup>12</sup> Wis 1:7 in the Greek *LXX* version. See also 1 Cor 2:10–11.

<sup>13</sup> Mt 27:46–47.

<sup>14</sup> See Mt 28:19–20; Jn 20:21.

causes the sun to rise on the good as well as the wicked"?<sup>15</sup> Of a God who apparently does not discriminate, who does not let us separate the wheat from the chaff before the time is right?<sup>16</sup>

For this reason we must first go back to symbolic theology. But if we must open ourselves up to the symbol, we must experience it as symbol; otherwise it is not a symbol. Every word has a threefold function: it signifies (contains a concept); but it has a further meaning (it contains a symbol), and in the third place, every true word carries life (it contains vital force). To put it more academically: every word can be translated into a *text* but it is also within a *context*. Nevertheless, we cannot grasp its strength if we do not grasp the existential *pretext* of those who utter it.

Text, context, and pretext belong to the knowledge of any word. In our scriptural—computerized, I would say—culture, we tend to identify the word with its text, its concept. However, every word entails a further meaning, which is grasped in symbolic knowledge—which is not conceptual knowledge. Conceptual knowledge is scientific knowledge; it tends toward univocity. Symbolic knowledge, on the other hand, is concrete, existential, and polysemous. If the symbol does not transmit anything to me, it does not constitute a symbol for me. Symbolic knowledge must count on the participation of the knower who discovers its value, but not its exclusively conceptual value. When the symbol begins to speak to us, when it begins to be alive, then the resurrection of theology is near. Christian faith is expressed in symbols that are translated into praxis: see the *Symbol of the Apostles*. When the *Symbol of the Apostles* is identified with Christian doctrine, the danger of turning faith into ideology is at hand.

And all this leads us to still another issue.

Every word (I am still referring to the subjective genitive) reveals a speaker. This is why, in theology, we must listen to the Word. Now then, in order to listen we must simultaneously know text, context, and pretext. The text I may perhaps begin to understand by reading it, by applying my conceptual knowledge. The context requires symbolic knowledge; I must see the text in its natural place in order for it to speak to me and so that I can understand it more fully. In order to know the pretext I must know the author of the text, the speaker; I must listen to him and understand him—that is to say, love him.

This art is not widely cultivated. We must know how to listen to the word, grasping its life, its strength, and to discover it as revelation. In short, listen to it insofar as sacrament. To treat others with respect, as all spiritual theologies preach, means knowing how to listen to them and how to take what they tell us seriously, like a revelation—even if, later, we apply the filter of our intellect in order to discern according to our own criteria.

How can we speak of human rights and of the dignity of people if we do not listen to what people say? And how can we understand them if we do not love them? One thing cannot be separated from the other. It is a circle, not vicious, but vital. Respect for human dignity means that nobody can be merely a means to reach an end. It means that every person is not only a creature of God, but also a revelation of God, because they speak. The word reveals them, and this revelation is divine. There are no issues that are more burning, passionate, and extraordinarily dangerous than those of a theology understood on these terms. Here lies the resurrection of theology: in the “discernment of the spirits,” in knowing how to listen to the heartbeats of this world of ours. The great challenge for the theology of liberation, which I referred to earlier, is that we have not listened to the voice of the people enough, especially to that of the humble to whom Christ alluded: the voice of the poor, which is a privileged “theological locus.”

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<sup>15</sup> Mt 5:45.

<sup>16</sup> Mt 13:30.

Only like this will we reach the resurrection of theology. For this resurrection we need a vision of the three dimensions of reality. A theology that is exclusively spiritual is not theology, and from the Christian point of view, it is impossible because it denies incarnation. In his controversy against Valentine's *gnōsis*, St. Irenaeus says that the true Man is not the "spiritual Man," but rather the "bodily Man" made in the image and likeness of God. The first dimension is the sensible one: a knowledge that implies love of matter, of corporeality, of the human body. The second aspect is intellectual knowledge. The third is the experience of the word as strength, life, mystery, sacrament. If I do not know how to see the Mystery in every word, it is because I do not know how to listen. If I do not know how to listen, I cannot have faith, as St. Paul says. Listening is a great art that implies attention, love, and taking the other seriously as source of revelation. Knowing how to listen implies the practice of all virtues, including concentration and humility.

This is the word that nourishes. I believe that recovering the genuine meaning of "theology" is *the* path for the radical transformation that is asked of every conscious person who lives in the world today. This implies integrating Martha and Mary<sup>17</sup> in our lives of action and contemplation, being (politically, economically, etc.) committed to the world we live in, and at the same time, feeling liberated, unattached. This transformation must begin in the foundation of every culture, in the foundation of Man, and this is the great task and the hope of theology. Salvation will not come, obviously, from mathematics, from archaeology, or from any specialized science—no matter how useful these are indirectly. It will come from life, lived in its plenitude, and I believe that, despite everything, theology and philosophy can be real symbols of this. All resurrection is the work of the Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

In brief: Theology can rise again from its ashes because, even if we cannot see the flame, there are burning embers thanks to the heat of tradition and the fire of so many theologians and philosophers who have not been discouraged by internal and external persecutions, and who have not let the smoldering wick<sup>19</sup> of their faith go out. I do not mean to say that I have only spoken of an apparent death. Theology is flame and not only embers. The Father of the Gods is *Agni*, the Fire, say the *Vedas*.

Theology still languishes, but "theology" is an abstraction. On the other hand, theologians (whom I would call theologian-philosophers) are alive, though silently and as a minority.

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<sup>17</sup> See Lk 10:38–42.

<sup>18</sup> See Rom 8:11.

<sup>19</sup> See Mt 12:20.



## SECTION XXV

### MEMORIES OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER: AN UNFINISHED SYMPHONY\*

Despite the fact that I studied in Bonn before the war, and that I recently held a seminar on "Heidegger and the Problem of Transcultural Language,"<sup>1</sup> I have never been either a pupil or a specialist on Heidegger. I was simply his friend, and this should suffice to define the context of my memories.

When in 1953 I gave a public talk at the University of Freiburg on "The Cultural Sin of the West," Martin Heidegger inquired of the then-dean, Max Müller, regarding the "who, where, how, and what" of every speaker who had dealt with similarly noteworthy subjects. The first time I met Heidegger, therefore, was when Professor Müller took me to visit him, and it was "love at first sight"; mutual liking, understanding, and identification were immediately born between us. The interesting thing is that it was not a question of "con-cordance" but rather, literally, "co-incidence"; different voices and intonations had led us to adopt similar visions. I do not remember exactly the contents of our first exchange, but just this surprising convergence, and the warmth and length of the meeting. Just as in the presence of a teacher, I spoke little and did not ask any particular questions. I remember, however, that he immediately approved of my ideas and that, with the clumsy temperament typical of a man of the South and the East, I interrupted him several times to finish his sentences—apparently correctly, nevertheless.

After that first meeting I went to visit Heidegger almost every time I came to Europe from India, and afterward also. Only once did he write saying we would not be able to see each other as that same day he was meeting his family. During my visits with Heidegger we were always alone, except for one time, which I would like to mention.

Following one of our previous meetings I had written a letter to Heidegger from Varanasi, in which I expressed a few thoughts on the *vedic* comprehension of *sat* and *asat* and the possible relationship with his concepts of *Being* and *Nothingness*. The next time I went to visit him at his home, two of my friends came with me. As we talked, one of these friends began

\* "An Unfinished Symphony"; original text: "Eine Unvollendete Symphonie," in *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger*, G. Neske (ed.) (Pfullingen, 1977), 173–78. Translated by Geraldine Clark.

<sup>1</sup> "Heidegger and the Problem of a Cross-Cultural Language."

to monopolize the conversation, and several times Heidegger and I exchanged glances like two shy lovers who are longing to say something but cannot because of the circumstances. My shyness was clumsy but understandable. He, however, was held back by a touching embarrassment and an indulgent politeness toward his guests. At the end of the visit, as we said good-bye, he told me reassuringly that next time we would discuss the questions I had outlined in my letter. This was the last time I saw him.

What I remember most clearly, thinking back on these meetings, was being able to freely discuss and reflect together with someone without the burden of learning and past history. I had read few of his works, but this did not limit our conversations. Perhaps it was just my impression, but it seems to me that the author of *Being and Time* had a very solid experience of modern temporality.

There were two main subjects, as I recall, that continued to come up in our conversations: technology (though I cannot say whether this was because I was also a scientist) and the Indic vision of Being (this undoubtedly due to my Indic origins).

With regard to the former, there is nothing I might add here that is not already known. I can only confirm that Heidegger appeared to be disheartened and saddened by the situation, which he sometimes interpreted as being hostile toward him, and mentioned often that I was not aware of all the negative things that happened to him (or words to that effect). At the end of one meeting, when we were saying good-bye at the door, he said something that I was later to hear often: "Only God can save us." I cannot remember now whether he actually said "*a* God."

Once when, on the subject of the situation in India, I spoke a few words in favor of technology, he brought out a large book in English, full of underlinings, to prove to me that not only is technology essentially unable to provide the answers to genuine human problems, but it does not even want such problems to be solved. I remember how attentively and approvingly he listened to me as I described the absolute supremacy of a large part of the people of India over the destiny of society and the cosmos—a slippery subject, because poverty and patience do not mean misery and fatalism. One cannot exploit the happiness of simple people.

Most of our conversations were on the subject of Being. I expounded to him a couple of hypotheses that I had not yet dared to develop into theories.

The first, in a nutshell, was whether what he affirmed about Being corresponded to what is written in the *vedānta* and, especially, the *Upanisad*—that is, that everything must be considered from the starting point of *brahman*, even though *brahman* is not, nor can be, the subject, much less the object, of thought. I apologized for the trivial use of the word "thought" as indicating the process of becoming aware. (He had given me a copy of his *Was heißt Denken?*<sup>2</sup> with a dedication.) He answered that it might be so, though he actually knew very little about Indic philosophy. Then we spoke about how the Japanese viewed things. He told me that in the well-known dialogue between a Japanese and an inquirer (in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*<sup>3</sup>), now and again he let the Japanese express his own thoughts, and he was very interested in my idea that Indic philosophy might be able to mediate between Western and Japanese philosophy. We were both very eager to continue this dialogue on Being and Nothingness....

My second conjecture concerned the development of the West and of its philosophy. Was not Heidegger's request to reawaken the "memory of Being"<sup>4</sup> with the aim of recov-

<sup>2</sup> "What Is Called Thinking?"

<sup>3</sup> "On the Way to Language."

<sup>4</sup> In German: "die Seinsgedächtnis," as opposed to the current usage in which *Gedächtnis* is a neutral rather than a feminine term [TN].

ering a type of thought that would issue from the very center of Being itself not the basic problem of all authentic theology? (As we know, the German feminine word comes from Heidegger himself; I played with the "sleeper" metaphor.) Theology distinguishes itself from philosophy by the very fact that it claims to be theocentric, and therefore cannot be manipulated by Man. He smiled and did not contradict me, but pointed out that theologians dealt with higher "entities," and theologians such as I had described them did not exist. Again, an inconclusive dialogue.

The name of Heidegger is, of course, increasingly well known in Indic philosophical circles, even though up to today, with a few exceptions, he has been neither well understood nor influential. He was interested in my theory (completely a posteriori) that two bridges and points of contact between India and the West might be, on one hand, Thomas Aquinas for Indic Scholasticism, and on the other, Martin Heidegger for the problems of the present day.

Unfortunately, I do not have on hand our short correspondence, but I would like to conclude this memory of our unfinished discussion with a passage from a letter that he wrote to me a few months before his death, on hearing about my seminar. He sent me the following poem written in his own hand (which seemed to me very significant, considering also the subject we were dealing with), accompanied by a letter (dated March 18, 1976) in which he says, "Der beiliegende Text ist zugleich ein Wort gegen die sich überall ausbreitende Linguistik, die das Wesen der Sprache der technologisch bestimmten Welt—dem Computer—dienstbar macht, in Wahrheit aber die Zerstörung der Sprache betreibt."<sup>5</sup>

Today I cannot yet say how much Heidegger has influenced me or what he means (*be-deutet*) to me. Yet I can, perhaps, attempt to say what he implies (*an-deutet*) to me (he was always amused by my circumlocutions in German) or, at least, what common waters I have had to cross.

To me Heidegger implies not only the end of an era, as has often been said, but, more than anything, the starting point of a new era. He had the courage and the audacity to suggest that the absolutely ultimate question (*die schlechthin letzte Frage*), which makes both the asker (*den Fragenden*) and the asked (*das Gefragte*) themselves questionable (*fragwürdig macht*) and problematic (*in Frage stellt*), is not the sum of the fragmentary questions of science, nor yet the philosophical question of Being, but the very question posed by Being itself when it asks why *it is*. Neither technology nor science, neither poeticizing nor philosophizing, whether objective or subjective, represent the sediment of three thousand years of European spiritual life capable of healing the "mark of Cain" along with other original human experiences, of mending the dismemberment of Prajapati, of overcoming the fears and divisions of existence.

Today Heidegger, spiritual legacy of the West, allows the sediment to settle at its own speed, to eventually become, perhaps, the seed of a possible symbiosis. This is what it is about. Heidegger has staked out the path and has set his axe to the root of the tree.<sup>6</sup> Whether to our perdition or our salvation, who can say? At least let it be to our destiny.

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<sup>5</sup> "The accompanying text also speaks out against the now omnipresent character of linguistics, which places the essence of language at the service of a technologically driven world—that of the computer—while, in actual fact, bringing about the destruction of language."

<sup>6</sup> See Mt 3:10.

## Sprache

Wann werden Wörter

treiben Worte?

Wann weilt der Wind zwischen Wenden?

Wann die Worte, ferne Spende,

sagen -

nicht bedürfen durch Bezeichnen

wenn sie zeigend knagen

an den Ort

malerter Eignis

- Sterbliche eignend dem Brauch -  
wohin Geläut der Schillen röhrt,

so früh Gedächtnis der Bestimmung  
sich fügsam klar entgegenstellt.

\*

von Prof. R. Panikkar

und seine Studenten

Herzlich grüssend

Martin Huidaggoer

Teg. 18. März 1976

*Sprache<sup>7</sup>*

*Wann werden Wörter  
wieder Wort?  
Wann weilt der Wind weisender Wende?*

*Wenn die Worte, ferne Spende,  
sagen,  
nicht bedeuten durch bezeichnen*

*wenn sie zeigend tragen  
an den Ort  
uralter ii<sup>8</sup>  
—Sterbliche eignend dem Brauch—*

*wohin Geläut der Stille ruft,  
wo Früh-Gedachtes der Be-Stimmung  
sich fügsam klar entgegenstuft.*

*Für Prof. R. Panikkar  
und seine Studenten  
Herzlich grüßen*

*Martin Heidegger  
Freib. 18 März 1976*

*Language*

*When will words  
Again be Word?  
When, the wind of change to guide us?*

*When words, as a distant gift,  
shall speak,  
labeling without meaning*

*When they show and lead us back  
to the place  
of the primordial Eignis  
(tradition is befitting to mortals)*

<sup>7</sup> Curator's Note: The poem was dedicated and sent by Heidegger to Panikkar, after the latter told him he planned to give a six-month course on language at the University of Santa Barbara. The translation is merely an attempted interpretation of a somewhat enigmatic text.

<sup>8</sup> Refers to the complex Heideggerian idea of *Er-Eignis*. [Ed. note.]

*where the voice of stillness calls us,  
and where the dawn of thought advances slowly,  
softly, clearly, toward its definition.*

*For Professor Panikkar  
and his students  
cordial greetings*

*Martin Heidegger  
Freiburg, March 18, 1976*

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## GLOSSARY

- Abhinavagupta (Abhinavaguptācārya) (Sansk.): a tenth-century Śaivite mystic.
- abhiṣeka* (Sansk.): initiation; anointing, royal consecration; consecrated water; ablution or ritual bath.
- adhyāsa* (Sansk.): "superimposition" or false attribution of the various properties of reality (the relative on the Absolute, etc.).
- advaita* (Sansk.): non-dualism (*a-dvaita*). Spiritual intuition that sees ultimate reality as neither monistic nor dualistic. The recognition that the merely quantitative problem of the one and the many in dialectical reasoning does not apply to the realm of ultimate reality. The latter, in fact, possesses polarities that cannot be divided into multiple separate units; not to be confused with monism.
- agapē* (Gr.): love.
- agni* (Sansk.): the sacrificial fire and the Divine Fire, one of the most important Gods or divine manifestations, the mediator or priest for Men and Gods.
- agora* (Gr.): public square where the townsfolk gathered and held meetings in ancient Greece.
- aham* (Sansk.): "I," first-person pronoun. *Aham* as ontological principle of existence is generally distinguished from *ahampākāra* as a psychological principle.
- aham asmi* (Sansk.): "I am," a formula of spiritual creation or *mahāvākyā*, which expresses the identity *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*.
- ajñāna* (Sansk.): ignorance.
- ākāśa* (Sansk.): air, sky, space, ether, emptiness (void), atmosphere, the fifth of the primordial elements (*mahābhūtāni*), which is the element of sound. It is all-pervading and infinite and, therefore, often identified with Brahman.
- alētheia* (Gr.): truth.
- 'am ha'aretz* (Aramaic): "people of the earth," lower classes, the disinherited, the poor, the untouchable, the ignorant, those who do not know the Torah.
- ānanda*: (Sansk.): joy, bliss (cf. *sukha*), the delights of love, and especially the highest spiritual bliss; *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda* represent three possible attempts at defining *brahman* or absolute reality.
- anātmavādin* (Sansk.): follower of the doctrine of *anātman*.
- anirvacanīya* (Sansk.): polarity between Being (*sat*) and Non-Being (*a-sat*), indescribable.
- antarikṣa* (Sansk.): that which is "between," the space of air between the sky and the earth, atmosphere, intermediate space (cf. *dyu* and *prthivī* as two other terms for *triloka*).
- anubhava* (Sansk.): direct experience, knowledge deriving from immediate spiritual intuition.
- anupāya* (Sansk.): not dependent on any intermediary.
- anuttaram* (Sansk.): that which cannot be exceeded; the "*non plus ultra*."
- apauruṣeya* (*apauruṣeyatva*) (Sansk.): "not of human origin," without *puruṣa*. The traditional view of the Vedic interpretation is that the *Veda* are not composed by human authors, but are the manifestation or revelation of the "Eternal Word" (cf. *vāc*), although the inspired *r̥si* are tools of revelation. In the beginning was the Word: *vāc*.

*apophatism*: belief that God cannot be known through reason as he transcends all physical reality and cognitive abilities.

*Arjuna* (Sansk.): the third of the five Pāṇḍava brothers and a famous warrior. To him Kṛṣṇa revealed the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

*asura* (Sansk.): spiritual, incorporeal, divine. In the *Rg-veda* the highest spirit, God (from *asu*, life, spiritual life). Varuṇa is considered an *asura*. Later the meaning changes completely and *asura* (now analyzed as *a-sura*, or "non-God") takes on the meaning of demon or evil spirit constantly opposed to the *deva* (*Brāhmaṇa*).

*attha* (Sansk.): here, now, furthermore; particle translated according to context.

*ātmavāda* (Sansk.): doctrine that accepts the existence of the Self, the *ātman*, as the essential, incorruptible center of being.

*ātmavādin* (Sansk.): follower of the *ātman* doctrine.

*aufhebung* (Ger.): "surpassing"; in Hegelian philosophy it means both "transcend" and "preserve," i.e., one of the opposite meanings is part of a process by which something or some position is negated to give place to another aspect, in which, nevertheless, the first is not fully lost.

*autonomy*: conception of the world based on which the universe and humans are considered *sui iuris* (Lat.), i.e., as self-determined and self-determinable, each being a law unto itself.

*avatāra* (Sansk.): "descent" of the divine (from *ava-tr*, descend), the "incarnations" of Viṣṇu in various animal and human forms. Traditionally, there are ten *avatāra*: *matsya* (the fish), *kūrma* (the tortoise), *varaḥa* (the wild boar), *narasiṁha* (the lion-man), *vāmana* (the dwarf), Paraśurāma (Rāma with the axe), Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, and Kalkin at the end of time. In general, any personal manifestation of the divinity, descended into this world in human form; descent as antonomasia.

*avidyā* (Sansk.): ignorance, nescience, absence of true and liberating knowledge, often identified with *māyā* and a cause of illusion and delusion.

*bhakti* (Sansk.): devotion, submission, love for God, personal relationship with God, devotional mysticism. One of the paths of salvation through union with the divinity.

*brahman* (Sansk.): prayer, sacrifice, the inherent power in sacrifice; the Absolute, the ultimate reason underlying all things; in the *Upaniṣad* it is identified with the immanent Self (*ātman*). Also, one of the four priests who perform the sacrifice or the clergy in general.

*bhūta* (Sansk.): bodiless or immaterial being, angel, spirit; element of nature.

*Brhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* (Sansk.): one of the most ancient and important *Upaniṣad*.

*circulus vitiosus* (Lat.): "vicious circle," bad reasoning, which states what is still to be proven. *circuminceſſio* (Lat.): compenetration of the three Persons of the Trinity. Corresponds to the Greek *perichōrēsis*.

*cit* (Sansk.): root noun (from the root *cit-*, to perceive, to comprehend, etc.), meaning "consciousness, intelligence." One of the three "characteristics" of Brahman (cf. *sat*, *ānanda*).

*citta* (Sansk.): the mind as an organ of thought, the working mind (see also *manas*).

*cosmotheandric*: the nonseparation between World, God, and Man.

*Christianity*: religiosity based on the experience of Christ.

*dalit* (Hindi, from Sansk. *dalita*): oppressed, crushed. Name that emarginated groups give themselves in India.

*Daodejing* (Chin.): "the book of the way and its power," a fundamental work of philosophical Taoism in China, attributed to Lao Tzu (sixth century BCE), historically demonstrable from third century BCE.

- darśana* (Sansk.): from the root *drśi*, to see, to observe, hence vision, sight; philosophy, Weltanschauung. In a religious context it means the vision of a saint or God, hence also meeting, audience, visit.
- dharma* (Sansk.): cosmic order, justice, duty, religious law, religious and social observances transmitted by tradition; "religion" as a collection of practices and laws. That which holds the world together. One of the four "human purposes" (cf. *puruṣārtha*).
- dhvani* (Sansk.): connotation, allusion, poetic style.
- diachronic*: that which extends through time.
- diatopic*: that which extends through space.
- dikṣā* (Sansk.): initiation; the preliminary rites; consecration of one who performs the sacrifice, such as that celebrated, for example, at the beginning of the *soma* and leads to a "new birth." Out of the context of sacrifice *dikṣā* is the initiation of the disciple by the *guru* into *saṃnyāsa*, the life of the errant monk.
- Ding an sich* (Ger.): a thing as it is in itself.
- Disciplina Arcani* (Lat.): discipline of secret doctrines and the teaching of the same, which was reserved for those initiated into the ancient religions of mysteries and early Christianity; obligation to maintain their secrecy.
- drṣti* (Sansk.): vision of the world.
- duhkha* (Sansk.): dis-quited, un-easy, distress, pain, suffering, anguish (lit. "having a poor axle hole," i.e., that which does not turn smoothly), a basic concept in Buddhism and Hinduism. Opposite of *sukha*.
- eidos* (Gr.): idea, form, appearance.
- empeiria* (Gr.): experience, practice, dexterity (experience—practical as opposed to theoretical activity—as the only valid source of knowledge).
- epochē* (Gr.): "suspension"; the suspending of all subjective judgments in the description of phenomena.
- eros* (Lat.): love.
- eteronomia*: conception of the world based on the hierarchical structure of reality: the laws that govern every sphere of existence come from a higher authority and are responsible for the functioning of everything that exists.
- hamartia* (Gr.): sin.
- heteronomy*: conception of the world based on the hierarchical structure of reality: the laws that govern every sphere of existence come from a higher instance and are responsible for the functioning of everything that exists.
- hieros gamos* (Gr.): holy marriage; refers to a sacred union or copulation (sometimes wedding) between two divinities or between a god and a man or woman, generally in a symbolic, often ritual, context.
- hiranyagarbha* (Sansk.): "the golden germ," a cosmological principle in the *Veda*, later identified with the creator (Brahmā).
- homeomorphic equivalents*: third-degree analogy in which the function exercised by a certain notion in a given system is equivalent to that of another notion in another system.
- hypostasis* (Gr.): "that which stands beneath": substance, person. A key and controversial word in the first disputes regarding the Trinity, especially due to the ambiguity of its Latin translation.

*idam* (Sansk.): "this," singular neuter form of the demonstrative pronoun. Generally means "this [universe]." *Idam sarvam*: all this, this all, the visible universe. *Idam* è 'questo' fine di tutta l'intenzionalità ed esperienza, distinto da *tat* as the "other," the transcendent purpose.

*Īśa, Īvara* (Sansk.): the Lord, from the root *ī-*, to be lord, to guide, to possess. Although a generic term for Lord, in posterior religious systems it is more often used for Śiva than for Viṣṇu. In the Vedānta, it is the manifested, qualified (*saguṇa*) aspect of Brahman.

**Jainism:** religious movement dating back to Pārśvanātha, a spiritual teacher of the seventh century BCE, which became crystallized in the sixth century BCE with Mahāvīra.

*jāti* (Sansk.): birth.

*jīvanmukta* (Sansk.): "liberated while alive and embodied," the highest category of the holy or fulfilled person who has reached the destination in this life and, therefore, in the human body; he who has fulfilled his *ātman-brahman*, ontological identity; he who has reached his own being, becoming totally integrated.

*jñāna* (Sansk.): knowledge (from the root *jñā-*, to know), intuition, wisdom; frequently the highest intuitive comprehension, the attaining of *ātman* or *brahman*: *Jñāna* is the result of meditation or revelation. Cf. *jñāna-mārga*.

*kairos* (Gr.): time, opportune moment, crucial point at which the destiny changes phase, epoch.

*kāma* (Sansk.): the creative power of desire, personified as the God of love; one of the *puruṣārtha*.

*kārikā* (Sansk.): mnemonic verse, doctrinal treatise in verse.

*karma, karman* (Sansk.): lit. "act, deed, action," from the root *kr-*, to act, to do; originally the sacred action, sacrifice, rite, later also moral act. The result of all actions and deeds according to the law of *karman* that regulates actions and their results in the universe. Later also connected with rebirth, it indicates the link between the actions carried out by a subject and his destiny in the cycle of deaths and rebirths.

*karmakāndin* (Sansk.): refers to those who emphasize the importance of the action, in occasions of ritual, for salvation/liberation.

*karuṇā* (Sansk.): comprehension and compassion; an important concept in Buddhism.

*kenōsis* (Gr.): annihilation, emptying of oneself, overcoming of one's ego.

*kērygma* (Gr.): message, proclamation (of the word of God), from the Greek *kēryssō* (to proclaim), corresponding to the first level of the evangelical teaching.

*kosmos* (Gr.): order, the ordered universe, the wholeness of the world.

*Kṛṣṇa* (Sansk.): *avatāra* of Viṣṇu (lit. "the black one") and one of the most popular Gods. He does not appear in the *Veda*, but he is the revealer of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He is the divine child and the shepherd God of Vṛndāvana, the incarnation of love and the playful God par excellence.

*kṣatriya* (Sansk.): member of the second caste (*varṇa*), made up of kings, warriors and nobility (see also *brahmān vākya, sūdra*).

*leit-ourgia* (Gr.): activity of the people, liturgy.

*linga* (Sansk.): characteristic feature of Śiva; phallus.

*logos* (Gr.): word, thought, judgment, reason. In the New Testament Christ as the word of God (Jn 1).

*mādhyamika* (Sansk.): the school of the "middle way" in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

*mahāvākyā* (Sansk.): "great saying." Refers to great expressions of the *Upaniṣad* that express very concisely the content of the experience of the Absolute.

- Mahāyāna* (Sansk.): "great vehicle." Branch of Buddhism established in India two thousand years ago.
- Maitreyī* (Sansk.): wife of the sage Yājñavalkya. Was considered a "knower of Brahman."
- manas* (Sansk.): mind in its broadest sense, heart, intellect, the internal organ that is the seat of thought, comprehension, feeling, imagination, and will. In Upaniṣadic anthropology, *manas* is one of the three constituent principles of Man (cf. *vāc*, *prāṇa*).
- mantra* (Sansk.): prayer, sacred formula (from the root *man-*, to think), sacred word, a Vedic text or verse. Usually only the part of the *Veda* consisting of the *Sambitā* is called a *mantra*. As it is a word of power it may also take the meaning of magic formula or spell.
- mārga* (Sansk.): road, path, way.
- māyā* (Sansk.): the mysterious power, wisdom, or ability of the Gods, hence the power of deceit, of illusion. In the Vedānta it is used as a synonym of ignorance and also to indicate the cosmic "illusion" that shrouds the absolute Brahman.
- metanoia* (Gr.): transformation, change of mentality or heart, conversion; going beyond (*meta*) the mental or rational (*nous*).
- mīmāṃsā*, *mīmāṃsaka* (Sansk.): one of the six classic systems of Indian philosophy, which deals mainly with the rudiments and the rules for interpreting the Vedic writings. From the root *man-*, to think. The two main schools are the *pūrvamīmāṃsā*, which focuses on the ritual interpretation of the *Veda* (see *karmakāndin*), and the *uttaramīmāṃsā*, which gives a philosophical and spiritual interpretation.
- mokṣa* (Sansk.): ultimate liberation from *samsāra*, the cycle of births and deaths, and from *karman*, ignorance and limitation: salvation. Homeomorphic equivalent of *sōtēria*.
- morfología*: the study of form, especially the forms of development of the living and of culture.
- mukti* (or *mokṣa*) (Sansk.): liberation from *samsāra*, which constitutes man's ultimate purpose in Hinduism.
- mūrti* (Sansk.): solid form, body, hence incarnation, person, figure, statue, image. Mainly used for the sacred images of Gods. The *Veda* do not describe any cult of the image (*pūjā*), which is a development posterior to Hinduism.
- mythos* (Gr.): the horizon of presence that does not require further inquiry.
- Nāgārjuna* (Sansk.): one of the most important philosophers of Mahāyāna Buddhism, inspirer of the Mādhyamika school.
- nairātmyavāda* (Sansk.): the theory of the denial of *ātman*, the self, the soul; radical unthinkability of the origin; see also *anātma-vāda*.
- naiyāyika* (Sansk.): followers of the nyāya system, supporters of the theory of the human origin of sacred texts.
- nāma-rūpa* (Sansk.): "name and form," the phenomenic world that constitutes the *samsāra*.
- Nara* (Sansk.): Man, the human person; it also refers to the eternal spirit pervading the universe.
- neti neti* (Sansk.): "not this, not this" (*na iti*), i.e., the negation of any kind of characterization of the *ātman* or *brahman* in the *Upaniṣad*; pure apophatism.
- niḥśreyasa*: spiritual bliss, "realization."
- nirodha* (Sansk.): halt, destruction.
- nirvāṇa* (Sansk.): lit. "the going out (of the flame)," extinction. The word does not refer to a condition, but indicates liberation from all dichotomy and conditioning, whether it be birth and death, time and space, being and non-being, ignorance and knowledge, or final extinction including time, space, and being; the ultimate destination for Buddhism and Jainism.
- nirvikalpa* (Sansk.): certain, beyond doubt.

*nirvikalpa-samādhi* (Sansk.): absorption into ultimate reality without self-awareness.  
*nixus, nisus* (Lat.): impulse, energy.

*noēma* (Gr.): in the phenomenology of Husserl the unit of intellectual perception.

*nomos* (Gr.): custom, rule, law.

*noumenon* (Gr.): that which is hidden behind the appearance (*phainomenon*); that which lies beyond the experience of the senses; "that which is thought"; the thing in itself.

*nous* (Gr.): mind, thought, intellect, reason.

*ontonomy*: intrinsic connection of an entity in relation to the totality of Being, the constitutive order (*nomos*) of every being as Being (*on*), harmony that allows the interdependence of all things.

*orthodoxy* and *orthopraxy*: "correct doctrine" and "correct action."

*pāda* (Sansk.): foot.

*pañca* (Sansk.): five.

Pantokratōr (Gr.): the Sovereign of all; designates Christ and also God.

*paramāgati* (Sansk.): the supreme destination.

*paramārthika* (Sansk.): ultimate level, ultimate reality, true reality.

*parousia* (Gr.): the return, the presence, the second coming of Christ.

*pascha* (Lat.): passing, passover.

*perichōrésis* (Gr.): notion of the early Church Trinitarian doctrine describing the interpenetration of divine persons. Corresponds to the Latin *circuminceſſio*.

*physis* (Gr.): nature.

*pisteuma* (Gr.): from *pisteuō*, to believe; that which the believer believes, the intentional sense of religious phenomena, the homeomorphic equivalent of *noēma*.

Prajāpati (Sansk.): "Lord of creatures," the primordial God, Father of the Gods and all beings. His position is central in the *Brahmaṇa*.

*prajñā* (Sansk.): understanding and awareness, consciousness, wisdom. Cf. *gnōsis, jñāna*.

*pramāṇa* (Sansk.): means for attaining valid knowledge.

*pramaṇavāda*: doctrine of the means by which knowledge is gained.

*pratibhā*: conscious intelligence; enlightenment induced by a conscious state of equilibrium.

*pratiṣṭhā* (Sansk.): foundation, support, base.

*pratityasamutpāda* (Sansk.): Buddhist doctrine of the "conditioned genesis" or "dependent origination," which claims that nothing exists for itself but carries within itself the conditions for its own existence, and that everything is mutually conditioned in the cycle of existence.

*preman* (Sansk.): love, love of God.

*primum analogatum* (Lat.): the point of reference for every analogy.

*psychē* (Gr.): soul, psyche, heart, animated being.

*pūjā* (Sansk.): worship, reverence, adoration. The concept is more closely related to the *bhakti* cult than the Vedic cult.

*Rg-veda* (Sansk.): the most ancient and important of the *Veda* texts.

*rta* (Sansk.): cosmic and sacred order, sacrifice as a universal law, also truth; the ultimate, dynamic, and harmonious structure of reality.

Rudra (Sansk.): Vedic God whose name derives from *rud-*, "to scream, to howl." This is the terrible God of storms, father of the class of Gods named Rudra and of the Marut. Closely related to Indra and Agni. Later became one of the manifestations of Śiva.

- sabda-brahman* (Sansk.): Brahman as sound, the revealed aspect of Brahman.
- śakti* (Sansk.): energy, potency, divine power, the creative energy of God. The active, dynamic—feminine—aspect of reality or of a God (generally of Śiva). Personified as the goddess Śakti, consort of Śiva with a creative function.
- sāṃkhyā* (Sansk.): lit. "enumeration, numeration," that is, of philosophical principles. One of the six traditional philosophical schools (*darśana*), the ontology on which the *yoga* system is based.
- sampradāya* (Sansk.): tradition, religious system and community that follows a tradition.
- Śaṅkara (Sansk.): eighth-century Hindū philosopher and teacher; one of the most famous exponents of a-dualist Vedānta.
- sat* (Sansk.): essence (pres. part. of *as-*, to be), existence, reality. Ultimately, only the Brahman is *sat*, as pure Being is the Basis of every existence. In the Vedānta one of the three "qualifications" of the Brahman (cf. *cit*, *ānanda*).
- satya* (Sansk.): true, truth, reality, "that which is" objectively and subjectively.
- satyasaṃkālpaḥ* (Sansk.): literally, "the one who has reached Reality"; referred to *brahman*: "the one whose intentions are realized," "the one whose intellectual structure is the Real."
- siddhi* (Sansk.): perfection, perfect capacity or faculty. Psychic faculties that may appear as a by-product of spiritual development.
- Sitz im Leben* (Ger.): vital setting, context.
- Śiva (Sansk.): propitious, gracious, pleasant, benevolent. He who is of good omen; in the *Veda* it is Rudra who is known to the Śvetāśvatara-*upaniṣad* as Śiva, one of the most important Gods of Hindū tradition. He is the destroyer of the universe (cf. also Brahmā, Viṣṇu), and also the great *yogin* and model of ascetics. His consort is Pārvatī or Umā.
- śivaitismo* (Sansk.): one of the two great families of the Hindū religion, whose God is Śiva.
- śloka* (Sansk.): stanza, verse, usually *anuṣṭubh* (four times eight syllables), epic meter. Generally used for a stanza, but not the Vedic *mantras*.
- sophia* (Gr.): wisdom.
- śraddhā* (Sansk.): "faith," the active trust (in Gods or in the rite itself) required in every act of worship; confidence (in the teachings of the *Veda*). In the *Rg-veda* (X.151) *śraddhā* is invoked almost as a divinity.
- śravanya* (Sansk.): "hearing, listening"; the ability to hear or to receive the teaching from the lips of the teachers. Listening in the *Veda* is the first of the three levels that the Vedānta considers necessary for attaining spiritual knowledge.
- śūnyatā* (Sansk.): void, vacuity, nothingness, the structural condition of reality and all things; represents the ultimate reality in Buddhism (cf. *nirvāṇa*).
- sūtra* (Sansk.): lit. "yarn, thread of a fabric." Short aphorism in a sacred text that generally cannot be understood without a comment (*bhāṣya*). The literature of the *sūtra* is part of the *smṛti* and is conceived to be easily memorized.
- svadharma* (Sansk.): intrinsic personal order, suited to one's own situation, caste, religion, etc.
- svayamprakāśa*, *svaprakāśa* (Sansk.): "self-illuminating," "that shines by his/its own light."
- tattva* (Sansk.): lit. "quiddity," i.e., essence, true nature, reality; a philosophical principle.
- tat tvam asi*; (Sansk.): "that is you," an Upaniṣadic expression meaning that *ātman* is ultimately Brahman. One of the four Great Sayings (*mahāvākyāni*) of the *Upaniṣad*, as taught to Śvetaketu.
- theanthropocosmic*: "divine-human-cosmic" (from Gr. *theos*, *anthrōpos* and *kosmos*).
- technē* (Gr.): art, ability, handicraft.

*tempiternity*: nonseparation between time and eternity.

*theologoumenon* (Gr.): theological enunciation, result and expression of the effort to understand faith and express a theological belief.

*topos/topoi* (Gr.): place/places.

*trika* (Sansk.): fundamental concept in Kashmir śivaism regarding the Triadic structure of the universe.

*triloka* (Sansk.): the "triple world," totality of the universe, consisting in three realms: earth, atmosphere, and sky, or earth, sky, and the nether regions (later called hell); the inhabitants of the three worlds are Gods, men, and demons.

*turiya* (Sansk.): the fourth mental state spoken of in the *Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad*, which transcends the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep and in which the meditator attains the consciousness that can free him from all bonds.

*Upadeśasābasrī* (Sansk.): "The (book) of (a) thousand 'teachings,'" one of the main works of Śaṅkara.

*upādhi* (Sansk.): acquisition, adjunct; everything that is superimposed and can be eliminated; illusory adjuncts that have attached themselves to Being.

*Upaniṣad* (Sansk.): fundamental sacred teaching in the form of texts constituting the end of the *Veda*; part of the revelation (*śruti*) and basis of posterior Hindū thought.

*upāya* (Sansk.): mezzo, metodo.

*vāc* (Sansk.): word; the sacred, primordial and creative Word; sound, also discourse, language, the organ of speech, voice. Sometimes only the *Rg-veda* and other times all the *Veda* are referred to as *vāc*.

*Vedānta* (Sansk.): lit. end of the *Veda*, i.e. the *Upaniṣad* as the climax of Vedic wisdom. In the sense of Uttaramimāṃsā or Vedāntavāda, a system of Indian philosophy (Advaita-vedānta, Dvaita-vedānta, etc.) based on the *Upaniṣad* that teaches a spiritual interpretation of the *Veda*; one of the last schools of Hindū philosophical thought, of which the most renowned representatives include Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva.

*vidyā* (Sansk.): knowledge, wisdom, also branch of knowledge; a section of a text in the *Upaniṣad*.

*vijñāna* (Sansk.): consciousness, knowledge, awareness.

*viveka* (Sansk.): discernment, discrimination.

*vyāvahārika* (Sansk.): "relating to earthly matters, to mundane life," i.e., the earthly way of seeing, the practical perspective; the relative level.

*vyoman* (Sansk.): sky; atmosphere; airspace.

*yang* (Chin.): the solar, celestial, masculine aspect in the *yin-yang* polarity.

*yin* (Chin.): the lunar, earthly, feminine aspect; complement of *yang*.

*yogin* (Sansk.): the ascetic, one who practices self-control, a follower of the path of yoga.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

An international authority on spirituality, the study of religions, and intercultural dialogue, Raimon Panikkar made intercultural and dialogical pluralism one of the hallmarks of his research, becoming a master "bridge builder," tireless in the promotion of dialogue between Western culture and the great Oriental Hindū and Buddhist traditions.

Born in 1918 in Barcelona of a Spanish Catholic mother and an Indian Hindū father, he was part of a plurality of traditions: Indian and European, Hindū and Christian, scientific and humanistic.

Panikkar held degrees in chemistry, philosophy, and theology, and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1946. He delivered courses and lectures in major European, Indian, and American universities.

A member of the International Institute of Philosophy (Paris), of the permanent Tribunal of the Peoples (Rome), and of the UNESCO Commission for intercultural dialogue, he also founded various philosophical journals and intercultural study centers. He held conferences in each of the five continents (including the renowned Gifford Lectures in 1988–1989 on "Trinity and Atheism").

Panikkar received international recognitions including honorary doctorates from the University of the Balearic Islands in 1997, the University of Tübingen in 2004, Urbino in 2005, and Girona in 2008, as well as prizes ranging from the "Premio Menéndez Pelayo de Humanidades" for his book *El concepto de naturaleza* in Madrid in 1946 to the "Premio Nonino 2001 a un maestro del nostro tempo" in Italy.

Panikkar lived in Tavertet in the Catalonian mountains, where he continued his contemplative experience and cultural activities from 1982 until his death on August 26, 2010. There he founded and presided over the intercultural study center Vivarium. Panikkar published more than fifty books in various languages and hundreds of articles on the philosophy of religion, theology, the philosophy of science, metaphysics, and Indology.

From the dialogue between religions to the peaceful cohabitation of peoples; from reflections on the future of the technological society to major work on political and social intelligence; from the recognition that all interreligious dialogue is based on an intrareligious dialogue to the promotion of open knowledge of other religions, of which he was a mediator; from his penetrating analysis of the crisis in spirituality to the practice of meditation and the rediscovery of his monastic identity; from the invitation of *colligite fragmenta* as a path toward the integration of reality to the proposal of a new innocence, Panikkar embodied a personal journey of fulfillment.

Among his most important publications with Orbis are *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), *Worship and Secular Man* (1973), *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1981), *The Silence of God* (1989), *Cosmotheandric Experience* (1993), and *Christophany* (2004).

